

# BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1986





**THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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## THIS MONTH'S COVER

The classic theme of a child dreaming of circus day originated with this lithograph which evokes a pure and benign universe in which "cute and cunning animals from either side the sea" play musical instruments, hopscotch, and dance while clowns dress like chickens and ride runaway ostriches. The bill is full of subtleties rarely found in other show art. Is the youngster a boy or girl? Is the child dreaming of what he or she expects to see the next day, or saw earlier that evening? Why is the vision of the circus limited to clowns and animals who act like humans? If ever a circus poster begged to be interpreted by Carl Jung, this is it. Intellectual considerations notwithstanding, the bill's immense artistic appeal makes it all the more remarkable. It is, quite simply, a masterpiece.

This one sheet was designed by the Strobbridge Lithograph Company in 1896. This example was printed for Barnum and Bailey's 1898 English tour. The original is part of the collection at the Circus World

Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The color separation was made with the help of Bill Biggerstaff.

## 1987 CHS CONVENTION

The Circus Historical Society will hold its 1987 convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July 8-12 in conjunction with the Great Circus Parade. Milwaukee was decided upon as a result of the success of the 1986 meeting at the same site. The festivities will begin with the set up of the circus and the arrival of the Great Circus Train on Wednesday, July 8, and conclude with the Great Circus Parade on Sunday, July 12. In between, a number of exciting and informative activities are planned. Once again the convention headquarters will be the Marc Plaza Hotel which will have a special low rate for CHS members. Future issues of the *Bandwagon* will contain more details and a registration card. Make your plans now for the great 1987 convention which promises to equal or exceed this year's.

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION as required by 39 U.S.C. 3685.  
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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Publisher. (9-18-86)



# Season's Greetings



*"Moving Forward  
in the Preservation and  
Presentation of Circus History"*

*from the Board of Directors  
and Staff of...*





# GREETINGS!

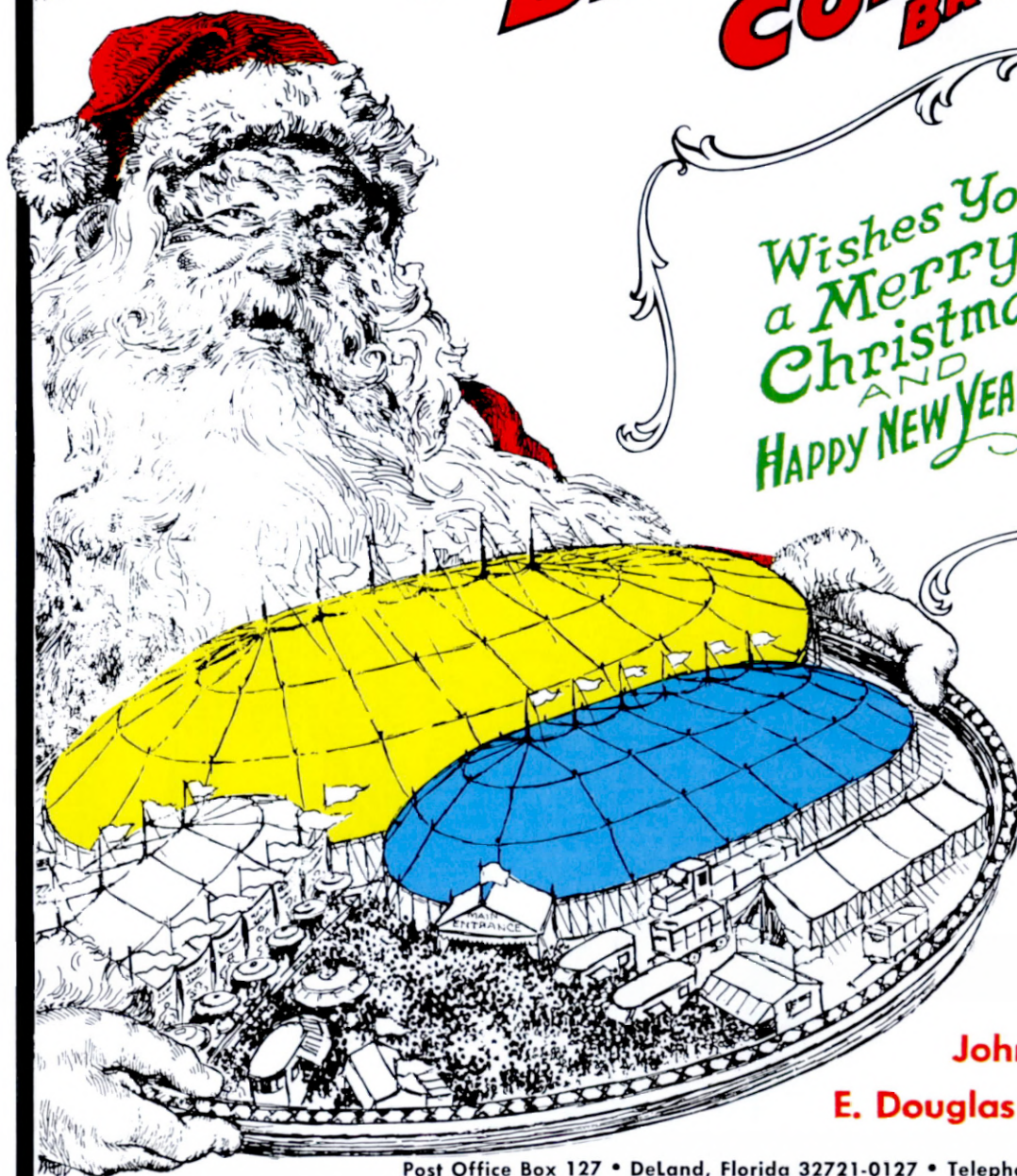


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From the Owners, Cast, and Staff

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# FLYING WARDS

THE GREATEST AERIAL FLYING RETURN ACT IN THE WORLD.

Few people living in the adjacent cities of Bloomington and Normal, Illinois, are aware that this community was for many years one of the most productive centers of circus entertainment in the country, even though several of those splendid artists still live within the community today. From the 1870's until quite recently, Bloomington contributed hundreds of performers to the lists of circus rosters throughout the world. In fact, the history of the flying return act could almost be considered to be the history of the Bloomington circus tradition. Remnants of this heritage carry over even now with each annual performance of Illinois State University's Gamma Phi Circus, one of the few showcases of amateur circus talent in America. But of the hundreds of performers who were either raised in Bloomington-Normal or who eventually came to reside there, one name stands out as having done more to build this community into the leading center for aerial performance: Eddie Ward.

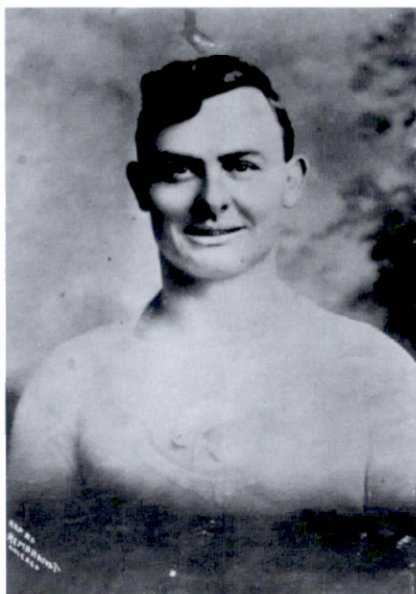
By the turn of the twentieth century Bloomington had produced two highly esteemed circus troupes: the Flying LaVans and the Flying Fishers. In succeeding years many new faces would enter the circus world, encouraged by their success. However, it wasn't until Eddie Ward built his training barn on East Emerson Street that Bloomington gained prominence as the major center for aerial performance. Numerous flying acts and scores of outstanding performers would spin off from the famous Ward flyers, a testament to Eddie's abilities as showman and teacher.

Although most accounts indicate that Eddie was born in 1889, his gravestone indicates that he was born in 1886. Similarly, his sister Jennie is listed in a *Daily Bulletin* article as being born in December of 1890, but the

by Steve Gossard

stone on her grave dates her birth as 1889. Eddie's birth was not registered in McLean County, Illinois, but the birth of Jennie May Ward was recorded as December 8, 1889, an indication that the dates on the grave markers are the correct dates. Their parents were Jasper and Henrietta Ward. Local folklore has it that Eddie and Jennie first began practicing on an improvised trapeze bar suspended from the branch of a thorn apple tree in the back yard of their home on either West Olive

Eddie Ward, circa 1915. Lorraine Valentine collection.



The Flying Wards 1924-1926 from their letterhead. Front row left to right: Erma Ward (Hubble), Mickey Comeau King, Effie Bradon or Bea Star, Nellie Sullivan, Mable Ward (Hubble), Mayme Ward, Lillie Arbuckle, Margie Reed, Agnes Marine Doss. Back row left to right: Les Thomas, Harold Voise, George Reed, Paul Sullivan, Bert Doss, Eddie Ward, and Ralph DuVal. Pfening Archives.

Street or 811 East Douglas Street.<sup>1</sup>

The story goes that Eddie, Jennie, and their brother, Elzie, were living together with their mother and her second husband, Gus Lindstrom, in the early 1900's when they first began performing. Although more than one source states that Gus Lindstrom was their step-father, Harrold Wilson, long-time acquaintance of "Sailor" Lindstrom, states that Gus was only married once, to an Eskimo woman in Alaska. The family was not well off and Eddie worked as a butcher's helper while attending school. Though it would seem that Eddie and Jennie began by working together as a team, Eddie consistently stated that he began performing at the age of ten and Jennie later at the same age.<sup>2</sup>

Eddie and Jennie developed what is called a "double trapeze" routine, an act which employs two bars, one suspended above the other, from which two people perform various tricks. Acts of this sort had been common for many years. Since they required a minimum of equipment and space to work in this was a convenient method for new performers with skill and courage to break into the field. Since this was not technically a "flying" act in which performers "leap" through the air from one bar to another, they were not required by law to use a net. All that was needed was a place to mount two trapeze bars. Eddie and



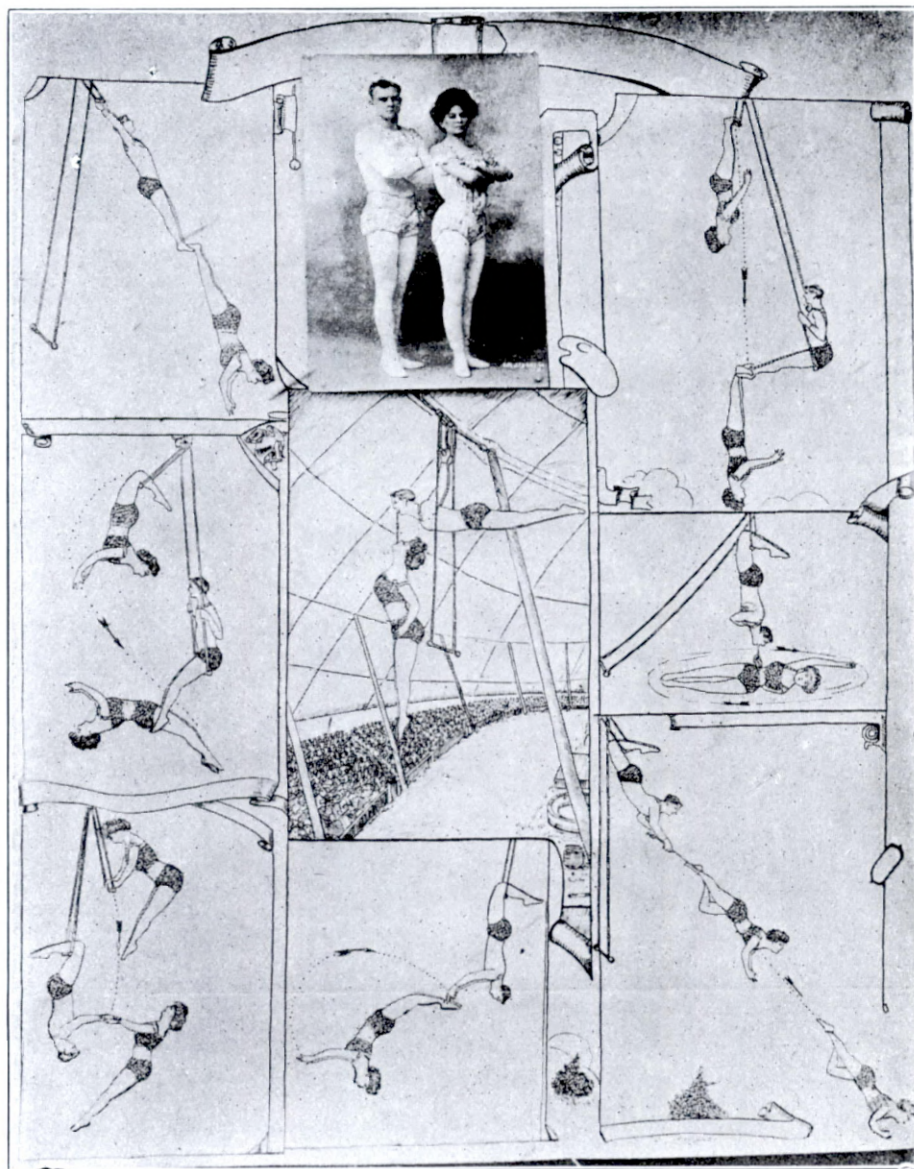
Jennie were engaged to perform at the fair in Atlanta, Illinois, one summer for fifteen dollars per week. By passing the hat they increased their profit to four-hundred and fifty dollars. This was their debut in the business. Jennie's obituary, as published in the *Daily Bulletin*, stated that her first engagement was with the Parker Brothers Carnival Company. In 1902 Eddie and Jennie made their first appearance in Bloomington "doing an acrobatic turn on parallel bars and swinging trapeze" and the next year found them using Washington Hall as a practice site. An article on file in the Bloomington Public Library states that at age fifteen in 1904 Jennie "first appears with her brother and one of the specialists with the Hall shows in a triple bar act in which she is hurled from one trapeze to another a distance of thirty-five feet." Evidently the "Hall shows" was a unit touring the local fairs. This was probably their first experience in a flying act although the term "triple bar act" may refer to a casting act in which the "casters" or "catchers" hang from stationary "cradles" and toss the leapers to the hands of one another, rather than referring to a "flying return act" in which the leaper swings out to the catcher on a swinging trapeze bar.<sup>3</sup>

In 1904 Eddie and Jennie toured the fair circuit with the Royal Amusement Company doing a "revolving ladder act" as well as the double trapeze. In 1905 the *Bloomington and Normal City Directory* listed Eddie Ward as "acrobat; res. 510 W. Clay." At the age of nineteen Eddie had already attained professional status. They received several contract offers for the 1906 season including offers from Great-Wallace and the Bodkin Circus.<sup>4</sup>

Clyde Noble had been working with his brother's act, the Flying Fishers, for three years in 1905 when he saw Eddie and Jennie perform together. He acknowledged their potential by writing a letter of recommendation for them to Ringling Brothers Circus.<sup>5</sup> The following year found Eddie and Jennie performing with Ringling Bros. during the regular season's tour although they did not open with the show at the Chicago Coliseum. The Wards were not the first double trapeze team from Bloomington to work with Ringling Bros., nor would they be the last. The Aerial Smiths had been with the show since 1904 and the Aerial Lafayettes later joined the show in 1912.

Meanwhile at Black Creek, Wisconsin, a young girl was working with a troupe of acrobats called the Hines-Kimball troupe. She was born at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on November 24, 1894 and adopted in 1904 by a cousin who was working with the Lemon Bros. Circus. She began working with the circus family sewing costumes, and eventually broke into the act. Her name was Mayme Kimball (Mayme Fay Harvey). In a few years she would marry Eddie Ward, and together they would establish the Wards' flying return act.<sup>6</sup>

A letterhead in the Pfening Archives describes Eddie and Jennie's double trapeze act as it was presented with Ringling Bros. in 1911. At least one of their tricks has probably never been duplicated, the "foot-to-foot catch." Jennie would drop head first from the high bar, Eddie catching her by the feet with



Eddie and Jennie Ward's remarkable routines are shown in this portion of their 1913 letterhead. Note illustrations of foot to foot catches. Pfening Archives.

his own feet, a spectacular crowd pleaser. Eddie's mother once described their "break-away" trick in which Jennie would plunge downward, caught by straps tied to her ankles, coming within a few inches of driving her head into the ground. Her long brown hair would sweep the earth as she swung forward and back. The Wards are said to be the first to perform this stunt which came to be a standard for all double trapeze performers.<sup>7</sup> Such was the sensational appeal of their act. One can imagine the impression it must have made on the public in the early part of the century before the introduction of radio and television when the motion picture industry was in its experimental stages.

In 1907 Eddie and Jennie worked with the Van Amburg Show, the first show owned and operated by Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers.

Mugivan and Bowers later organized the American Circus Corporation, which contracted the Wards a few years later to feature their various aerial acts. Eddie and Jennie returned to Ringling Bros. in 1908.<sup>8</sup>

An undated letter from Eddie to Al Ringling from the Van Amburg Show care of *Billboard* magazine must relate to contracts with Ringling Bros. for the 1908 season. In this letter Eddie listed his address as 510 West Clay, just as it had been listed in the *Bloomington and Normal Directory* in 1905. The letterhead illustration was the same photograph featured in *Billboard* that year advertising the Wards with the Van Amburg Show. The letterhead described them as "Double Trapeze and Comedy Ladder Acts" and "Introducing Half Summersalts [sic], The Swings, Drops, and finish with Breakaway, Double Trapeze Lasting 7 Minutes, Ladder 8 Minutes."

In another letter dated February 27, 1908 Eddie inquired whether he would be required to clown with the show or whether the Ringlings wanted their ladders act instead "as it



will save me considerable to leave ladder at home providing we didnt [sic] have to do the ladder act."<sup>9</sup>

Their contract with Ringling Bros. for 1908 describes their duties as "Double Trapeze and Comedy Ladder act. Both go in Tournament, Entry parade, Etc." commencing April 5, 1908 with a salary of \$40 per week. Appearing in tournament, parade, filling in clowning, etc. was a normal part of the performers' responsibilities, as rule number seven of the contract stated that any performer may be "required to make themselves generally useful." The same contract was renewed for the 1909 season but in 1910 a new contract was drawn up giving the employers the option of "paying \$5.00 (five dollars) extra for iron-jaw act by Miss Ward if act is required" with their salary established at \$55 per week. If salary increases are any indication of a performer's merit, the Wards were making a favorable impression on their employers, for in 1911 their salary was increased to \$80 per week, double what it had been just three years earlier. Eddie and Jennie remained with Ringling Bros. until 1912, occupying the center ring position in 1911 and 1912.<sup>10</sup>

An article on file in the Bloomington Public Library from March of 1908 stated that the Wards were doing "a big return and casting act in which they use a big net" but it did not give further details as to whom they were performing with in this act. It is not likely that Eddie and Jennie were performing this act alone. The days of the two person flying return act were gone.

In the early 1900's there were numerous indoor practice sites in Bloomington, the most conspicuous being the Y.M.C.A. gymnasium on East Street. In 1909 the Y.M.C.A. had a permanent rigging built for the purpose of training its members in aerial acrobatics. Professional performers were encouraged to use the facilities during the off season winter months and in return would put on public winter exhibitions from time to time, the proceeds of which went to the Y.M.C.A. Years later this Y.M.C.A. Circus would become a regular annual event. Young students could benefit from the professional expertise, and the newcomers would sometimes join the professional troupes. Eddie is listed among the tumblers and leapers in the first public performance of the Y.M.C.A. Circus in January of 1910, which was called the "Four Claws and Stingling Brothers Circus." Elzie Ward's obituary stated that the Wards were among the professionals using the Y.M.C.A. facilities for practice before the construction of the barn on Emerson Street.<sup>11</sup> The Wards participated in many of these Y.M.C.A. Circuses in the years to come.

Though the Wards were not listed with the performers of the Y.M.C.A. Circus the following year, Eddie was instrumental in organizing a circus which was sponsored by the Eagles Club at the Coliseum that year. Possibly the Wards were using practice facilities provided by the Eagles organization at that time. On the same program of this circus were a number of performers who had come to Bloomington from Petersburg, Illinois, where Edward Shipp had operated a winter circus in a ring barn since the 1880's.



Eddie and Jennie Ward early in their career in a pose typical of the period. Lorraine Valentine collection.

This circus was now under the management of Pat and Dan Kelly, who brought to Bloomington a number of circus acts which included the Hines-Kimball troupe.<sup>12</sup> Here Eddie had an opportunity to meet young Mayme Kimball. Eddie might have been instrumental in placing the Hines-Kimballs with the Ringling Bros. Circus for 1912. Impressed by

Jennie Ward while on Ringling in 1910. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.



the local talent available at the Y.M.C.A. and inspired by the idea of training and presenting a variety of acts under contract to one or more circuses, as Edward Shipp had done in Petersburg, Eddie might have already begun to formulate ideas of building a barn of his own.

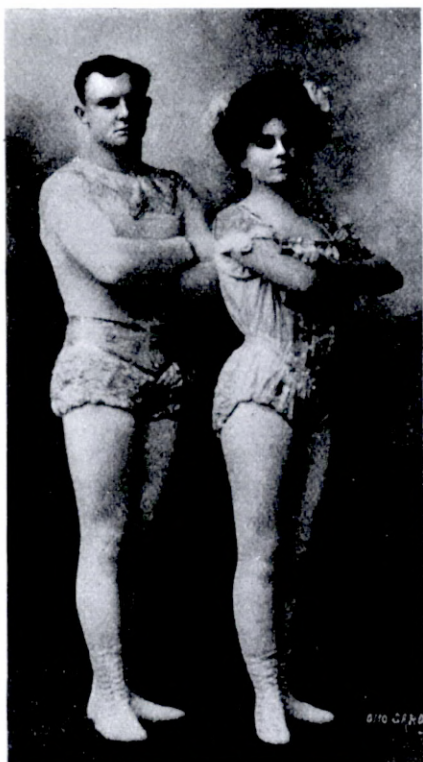
The Hines-Kimballs were an old time troupe from the heart of circus country. In 1905 Mayme Kimball made her debut with the troupe on the Van Amburg Show. In 1907 the Hines-Kimballs had been operating their own winter circus in Black Creek, Wisconsin. The company consisted of John G. Hines, proprietor; Mrs. Nettie Kimball, privileges; and seven acrobats. They toured cities in Wisconsin through June 8 when they presumably joined a major circus or fair unit. In 1908 and 1909 they were with the Norris and Rowe Circus. In 1909 they had toured with Edward Shipp's American Circus in Panama and the West Indies. The Hines-Kimballs had been listed on the program as follows: The Kimball Sisters, double trapeze; Guy Hines, aerial perch; Jennie Kimball, cloud swings; and Guy Hines and Mayme Kimball, wire performers. They had returned to the U.S. in March of that year. In 1910 they were on Sparks and in 1911 during the tent season they toured with the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Circus. In 1912 they appeared with Ringling Bros. Circus for the first time.<sup>13</sup>

Some time before 1910 Eddie and Jennie Ward also toured Central and South America. This may have been the winter of 1905-06, as an article in the June 13, 1905 *Daily Bulletin* had stated that they were "planning to go south so that they will be drawing salary almost the entire year." They may have toured with Edward Shipp's circus since Panama was one of the stops on their tour and Shipp usually played the Panama area. Though Shipp's circus toured extensively in the tropics and the Southern Hemisphere, he maintained his permanent address in Petersburg. Further research may reveal that the Wards' relationship to the circus people in Petersburg was quite extensive.

An unfortunate incident occurred in August of 1911 with Ringling Bros. Circus at Grand Island, Nebraska. The Bloomington *Daily Pantagraph* of August 8, 1911 picked up the story from *The Independent* of Grand Island and repeated the erroneous account that "Miss Ward was swinging from a rope held by her brother above, and her body was suspended by a hold with her teeth. The breaking of one of her front teeth caused her to lose her grip and . . . she fell to the ground." The August 19, 1911 *Billboard* reported what actually happened and their account was confirmed by a statement which Eddie made to Earl Chapin May in 1928. The *Billboard* article ran as follows:

Grand Island, Neb. Aug. 10 (Special to the *Billboard*).—Miss Jennie Ward, one of the Flying Wards, high trapeze artists with Ringling Bros.' Show fell from the top of the tent during the afternoon performance here last Thursday. Since the team worked without a netting of any kind, she fell with a great force to the ground and is





Eddie and Jennie in a pose used on their letterhead.

said to be probably fatally injured internally.

She was performing with her brother, who missed his calculations in one of their more daring stunts and the young woman slipped through his legs.

This was the previously mentioned "foot-to-foot catch." Although *The Independent* had been amiss in repeating rumors as to the cause of the accident, it was more accurate in reporting the prognosis of Jennie's condition:

Rumors were afloat last evening and early this morning that the young lady had passed away before she reached St. Mary's Hospital. But this morning the report was found to be untrue and that there is every indication that the young lady will fully recover and be able to resume her work in a short time.

One might imagine the horror Eddie felt watching her slip beyond his grasp and looking down to see the little girl who had depended on him lying motionless forty feet below, and reading in the leading entertainment magazine two weeks later that he had "missed his calculations." According to Eddie's 1928 account the accident was caused by "forgetting discipline. She didn't time her movements accurately." He stated that "In hurrying through our routine before the equestrian director's whistle blew . . . Jennie slipped from the trapeze bar. I let go one hand to reach for her. But she fell too fast for me, and her body landed across the wooden ring curb." Speed had always been an asset to circus acts since any lull in the action could cause the performance to drag and the au-

dience to become bored. Also, the circus performance was synchronized in every aspect to afford the maximum effect. When the equestrian director's whistle blew the act was finished. Few performers were allowed time to retrace their steps and reattempt missed tricks.

Eddie went on to say that Jennie's neck had broken a two-by-four board in the ring curb on impact.

. . . but the ring curb didn't break her neck. Why? Partly because luck was with her at the time, but principally because her well-developed neck and shoulder muscles protected her . . . Youth and perfect condition helped Jennie live through that forty-foot fall. . . .<sup>14</sup>

*The Independent* article also voiced this opinion. Although "she had struck with a thud that was heard in every part of the big tent" and "the immense throng which witnessed the uncanny sight for a moment looked upon it as certain death" Jennie did survive the fall from a height approximately equal to a four story building. "An ordinary person could not have withstood the fall . . . But her strong physique and the relaxation of her muscles when she fell probably saved her life." How could anyone relax in a fall of forty feet? This statement taken together with the fact that she fell on her back is a clear indication that Jennie had been experienced in net falling. The posture of a flyer when he drops to the net is always to cushion the impact by landing on his back across the shoulders.

Though she suffered no broken bones, Jennie was hospitalized for five weeks. Her back had been bent into a half circle in landing on the ring curb. She treated herself with self-imposed therapy. Eddie described how Jennie made her comeback:

Every day she'd take hold of a side rope leading from a tent stake to a side pole of the tent, and gradually, day by day, pull herself erect. It was punishment of the toughest kind.

Jennie's fall was again mentioned in *Billboard's* coverage of the Ringling Bros. opening in 1912.

Three letters on file at the Illinois State University Milner Library Special Collections relate directly to this incident. The first, a carbon copy of Charles Ringling's letter to Eddie Ward, is dated November 6, 1911 from Baraboo, Wisconsin.

I have your letter of the 2nd inst., and am very glad to know that Miss Ward is working good again. I want to make some kind of concession on next season and, therefore, will offer you the same salary as before, cutting out the clowning entirely. We trust that this will meet with your approval, knowing that Eddie does not like the clowning very well. Of course you must realize that the clowning practically saved us a man and you should take this into consideration in considering the offer we are making you.

Eddie's reply of November 8 from Center Point, Iowa:

Dear Sir

I received your letter of Nov. 6 and if you can give me five dollars more a week and no clowning as I no [sic] you have plenty of places to put me with out clowning hoping to here [sic] from you soon as I am going East for the Winter season . . .

Charles Ringling replied, "we herewith enclose you [sic] contracts at \$85.00 per week, omitting your clowning." This was Eddie in the role of business man. Ringling's reference to "costing them a man" was in reference to an additional salary which it would be necessary to pay if another clown were hired. It was obvious that the circus could not be held responsible for the accident, but Eddie was not declining to do extra work so long as it was not in a clown suit, and knowing that "you have plenty of places to put me" might have meant working instead with one of the flying acts with the show, where Eddie would receive valuable experience. So all that Eddie was asking as a "concession" to the accident was \$5.00 a week. He was a shrewd business man.

The Kimball Sisters (in fact, cousins, Mayme and Jennie) did a double trapeze routine which was presented with Ringling Bros. in 1912 in the same display as the Wards'. Eddie and Mayme must have had ample opportunity to work closely together. They were married while the show was on the road. He was twenty-six years old and Mayme was eighteen. In late December Jennie married Alec Todd, who had been with the Flying Herberts, in Marion, Iowa.<sup>15</sup>

If Eddie did work with one of the flying acts with Ringling Bros. in 1912 it may not have been the first time. In the previously mentioned interview with Earl Chapin May in 1928 Eddie mentioned, "when I was broken into the flying game, the pupil, or 'punk' . . . did his first net falling and flying without any kind of safety appliance." Since Eddie and Jennie used no net in their double trapeze act this statement must refer to someone else breaking him in on a flying return act. Eddie might have received some instruction from the other flyers at the Y.M.C.A., but it is just as likely that he had worked during the circus season filling in with the flying acts performing with Ringling Bros.

In 1913 the Wards left Ringling Bros. to tour Europe for the Mirioella booking agency. A letter from Eddie to Al Ringling dated March 1913 provides a clue as to why the Wards did not go with Ringling Bros. that year.

. . . since I wrote you about my wife my sister has informed me that her husband strictly refuses to let her do the trapeze act with me . . . and as the act I do with my wife is not as good as the one I do with my sister as we have only practiced a short time, it will be impossible for me to fulfill [sic] the contract I hold with you.<sup>16</sup>

Between their new family commitments and their professional responsibilities the Wards were obviously having conflicts. Apparently it was yet undecided as to what kind of act they would present in the future. Either that or Eddie was deliberately breaking his



contract in order to give himself time to prepare his new act. Jennie's husband, Alec, probably had in mind the fall which she took in 1911 when he refused to allow her to work their double trapeze routine. Perhaps Jennie wanted out of it herself. At any rate, the act which the Wards presented on tour in Europe must have been Eddie and Mayme's new double trapeze act.

On November 14, 1913 Alec Todd wrote to Al Ringling from Center Point, Iowa, describing the new flying return act which they were putting together:

Now Edward has just got back from Europe and brought over with him a fine leaper, so now we are going to start to put up our practicing building which will be complete by December 1st, as soon as it is finished we will commence to practice the big act . . .

Now the aerial act consists of six people, three ladies and three gentlemen, there will be two ladies [sic] leapers and one lady catcher, two gentlemen leapers, and one gentleman catcher . . .

I hear that you are going to put out the Sells show next summer, if this is true why I thought you might have an opening with it for our act.<sup>17</sup>

A flying return act requires much more in the way of equipment, with a complete trapeze rigging, pedestal boards, nets, pulleys, cable, etc. This was still three years prior to the construction of the Ward training barn on Emerson Street in Bloomington. Alec's reference to a new training building refers to a barn which Eddie was building at Center Point, Iowa. *Billboard* magazine had stated that Jennie and Alec had spent their honeymoon "on the farm of the bride's mother" in Iowa. This was a reference to a farm near Center Point, Iowa. In a 1913 issue of *Billboard* the Wards had listed their perma-

**Mayme Ward at the height of her career in 1921. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.**



nent address as Center Point. It is possible that there was already a barn of some sort on this property which the Wards had been using for practice even before 1913. By January of 1914 the Wards had finished their training barn "on their farm near Troy Mills, Ia., for practicing purposes, and are putting together a six-people flying act. They have a new leaper coming from England."<sup>18</sup> From March 15-28 the Wards put on a performance on this site with several other performers who "came over from Chicago to help out with the program." The general superintendent of Gollmar Bros. Circus, Zeb Catannah, supervised the show for the Wards. He later married one of the Wards' lady flyers, Bessie Boyer. This barn had a seating capacity of over six hundred, probably larger than the barn which they later built in Bloomington. They charged \$.50 for adults, \$.25 for children, with an added \$.25 for reserved seating. With an attendance of about fifteen hundred people per day they anticipated putting on another performance the following year. Apparently the 1915 performance did not come off, however, due to the arrival of Eddie and Mayme's first-born son, Eddie Junior, who was born on the farm in February.<sup>19</sup> The Wards seem to have had every intention of establishing themselves permanently at Center Point. The *Billboard* of June 25, 1932 stated that the Flying Wards had originated at this site, and at that time the barn still had the name "The Flying Wards" painted in large bold script across its side. The barn was so well known to the local residents that the crossroads where it set is still known as "Flying Wards Corner" today, although few people now living can recall why.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the Wards' family ties led them to discontinue practice at the Center Point site, but as yet it remains a mystery why Eddie would build a four thousand dollar practice barn in Iowa, and build a new barn in Bloomington just two years later.

During the summer circus season of 1914 the Flying Wards toured with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The troupe included Alec and Jennie Todd, Edward and Mayme Ward, William Ward (William Summers), and Bessie Catannah (sometimes spelled Katrenke, and other various spellings). Evidently the Wards' tour of Europe was as much a talent scouting venture as a performance tour, and Billie Summers must have been the new leaper whom Eddie had brought back to America with him from England. Eddie described his new act in a letter to Charles Ringling in which he offered his new act to Ringling Bros. near the end of the season:

. . . the act consists of  
The straight passing leap  
One forward . . .  
One and half  
Doubles and catch  
Twisters  
Double Pirouettes  
and other small tricks  
all ladies finish with  
Doubles and one man with  
Tripple [sic]  
We are doing leaps on both sides.  
Hoping you get someone over to see  
the act as it is very fast no  
stauling [sic] what ever. Salary \$300



**Mayme and Eddie Ward, circa 1914. Lorraine Valentine collection.**

per week. Please let us know if you can place us as we have other offers.<sup>21</sup>

The reference to finishing with doubles and triple would indicate somersaults into the net and not a completed hand catch. A "passing leap" and "forward passing leap" are tricks in which Eddie, the catcher, returns one leaper to the flyer as the other swings out to him, the two passing in the process. A "forward passing leap" or "forward over passing leap" refers to one flyer somersaulting over the other in passing. These passing tricks had always been favorites with audiences since they deployed two flyers in the air at once.

Although these were all standard tricks in the repertoire of the best flying acts they were at an advanced level of professionalism, especially for a troupe in its first year. In his statement to Earl Chapin May in 1928 Eddie said that "It usually takes about four years to make a professional flyer." Although the members of Eddie's new troupe were not exactly "first of May" greenhorns he had gotten his flying act together in a surprisingly short time. The three hundred dollar fee seems to have been the standard rate for a top class flying act at the time; the Charles Siegrist Troupe was receiving that same salary from Ringling Bros.<sup>22</sup> At any rate, Eddie was not selling his troupe cheaply to compensate for inexperience. The statement that he had "other offers" was probably not an exaggeration. The Flying Wards remained with Hagenbeck-Wallace for four consecutive years.

When the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus appeared in Bloomington in August of 1914 the flying act was billed as the "Ward-Fischer Troupe" from Amsterdam, Holland, an obvious faux pas on the part of the circus' advance publicity agents, who apparently did not realize that both the Wards and the Fisher troupe were natives of Bloomington. Yet there might have been a remote element of truth in the claim, for the *Daily Pantagraph* reported later that the Wards had with them a German



named Eugene Dray, who was expected to enlist with the German Armed Forces at the close of the season. The "Ward-Fischer Troupe" was also advertised in the *Daily Pantagraph* as having one "Paul Fischer," supposedly the only flyer capable of doing a triple somersault to a hand catch.<sup>23</sup> A *Daily Bulletin* ad of August 26, 1914 echoed the claim but stated that the performer's name was Harry Ward. Yet the photographs of the Fishers and the Wards which were featured in the *Daily Bulletin* identified the members of both troupes and none of the personnel were named Eugene, Paul, or Harry. The triple somersault had always been considered the ultimate achievement for any flying act and all flyers strove to perfect this stunt, although in 1914 Ernest Clark, of the Flying Clarkonians, was probably the only flyer capable of completing a triple often enough to claim consistency. It is doubtful that either the Wards or the Fishers had a flyer of this caliber. At any rate, if the flyers had been advertised as Bloomington residents all of these overexaggerations (to put it politely) would have been unnecessary in this town.

The Fisher troupe included two brothers from Charles Fisher's (Charles Waller) home town of Quincy, Illinois, the Beckman brothers. The Beckmans would be heard from again in connection with Alec Todd.

In addition to their new flying return act, the Wards continued to perform their double trapeze act for several years. The flying act was described in the April 18, 1914 *Billboard* as "Casting Act by the Six Flying Wards, in all white tights with spangled butterfly on breast. A great big act of merit."

Obviously 1914 was an important year for the Wards, made busier by the anticipation of Eddie and Mayme's first born child. With the arrival of each of Eddie and Mayme's three children Mayme continued working into her seventh month of pregnancy. Among Eddie's other property holdings was a plot of land called "Braidwood" located just west of the site where he would build his training barn in Bloomington. At one edge of this property, the corner of Emerson and Linden Streets, was "Braidwood Mansion," a house which Eddie provided for Jennie and Alec's residence. The 1917 *Bloomington and Normal City Directory* later listed the Todds: "Todd Alexander (Jennie) r. 803 E. Emerson."

In the spring of 1915 the Wards again performed with the Y.M.C.A. Circus. From March 25th through the 27th the Wards presented their double trapeze act, Billie Summers and Mayme Ward doing a single rope routine called "cloud swings," and the Six Flying Wards "Double Flying Return Act."<sup>24</sup> The term "double flying return act" probably refers to a rigging with pedestal boards at either end with two catchers and two flybars, as Eddie had written in his letter to Charles Ringling in 1914, "We are doing leaps on both sides." Customarily a flying return rigging would have only one pedestal board from which the flyers take off and return.

During the tent season of 1915 the Wards began to travel with two complete riggings to insure against damage that they would always have the proper equipment.<sup>25</sup> That year the personnel of the Ward troupe with



The Flying Wards, circa 1915. Left to right: Alec Todd, Jennie Ward Todd, Bessie Catannah, Eddie Ward, Billie Summers, Mayme Ward. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

Hagenbeck-Wallace remained the same with the exception of one additional member, Ernie Lane. Ernie would prove to be a standout performer as time went by. Construction of the Wards' new practice barn probably began that year and it was certainly in use in 1916.<sup>26</sup> Thereafter the Wards' permanent address would be 1201 East Emerson Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

As mentioned before, Eddie might have conceived of the idea of constructing a practice barn as early as 1910. It is not known whether Eddie had a local builder design the plans for the barn according to his own specifications or whether he used some other structure as a prototype. This barn certainly did not resemble Dan Kelly's ring barn in Petersburg, which was designed by Ed Shipp primarily for horseback riding acts. It may have followed the design of the barn which Eddie had built at Center Point, although on a smaller scale, or it may have been built after the design of a structure used by the Hines-Kimbells in Wisconsin, if they had used such a barn. In its finished state it was just large enough to accommodate two complete riggings set side by side plus room at either end for other kinds of aerial apparatus.

The Ward barn appeared deceptively small from a distance, owing to the fact that the doors and windows were so large. It stood 40 feet high, 40 feet wide, and 77 feet long at the base. The front door opening measured 10 feet wide by 9½ feet high. All windows on the sides measured 2 feet wide and six feet high.

When those measurements were taken by Robert L. Parkinson, Research Director for Circus World Museum, in 1965, he made the following observation: "On each of the 12 interior upright supports (6 on each side) were many step-boards, nailed in, like steps to a kid's tree-house. I was told these were used for neighborhood kids to climb to get them acquainted with altitude and interest some of them in the flying act." This supposition is supported by John O'Farrell, of Bloomington,

who states that he used to visit the Ward barn as a kid in the early 1920's. "Eddie gave us flying lessons," John says. "Eddie used to open the place up early to get the stove heated up and the equipment ready, so that if you got there before 9 o'clock in the morning (that's when his people came out to practice) he would give you lessons on how to swing off, fall into the net, and even do simple tricks, free of charge." This does not imply that one could purchase Eddie's instruction for a price. Eddie never charged a fee from his students. In this instance "free of charge" means that Eddie's time was never too valuable for youngsters who had the desire to learn. This was the Eddie Ward "flying school."

The Wards must have been a close knit family in those days with new family and professional responsibilities. No doubt Jennie and Mayme both took a hand in caring for little Eddie Junior. There was a traditional separation of roles between men and women in circus flying acts: the women made all costumes while the men were responsible for equipment maintenance, net-making, etc. The *Daily Bulletin* stated on March 9, 1917:

There are four sets of nets at the Ward building which the Wards have made. These are always kept on hand so that should the nets become damaged in any manner while on the road, a wire home could replace them in a short time. . . . The rigging which is the term applied to the steel work which supports the trapeze is also made by the company.

Eddie and Mayme's house on East Emerson Street had a special sewing room in which Mayme designed costumes and sewed each sequin and every bit of lace and fringe by hand. One can interpret photos of Mayme and Jennie from this period to reflect as much pride in their handicraft as in their athletic prowess.

The personnel of the Ward troupe changed little from 1915 to 1918. In 1916 they consisted of Eddie, Mayme, Alec, Ernie, and Billie. They toured Cuba in the winter season of 1916-1917 and at the beginning of the 1917 season the Hagenbeck-Wallace program listed them as the "Seven Flying Wards" in Display 19, the only change being the addition of



"Merle Ward" (probably Myrtle Darling, who was to marry Billie Summers the following year). Myrtle had been one of the Darling Sisters trapeze act with the Sells-Floto Circus in 1916. Later in the season Bessie Catannah would rejoin the Wards, filling in for Ernie Lane, who spent a few months in the Armed Forces.<sup>27</sup>

An average person may memorize names, dates, addresses, tables, and schedules; while a person of exceptional ability may be capable of memorizing long lists of information, complete books of verse, and lengthy documents. But what kind of person is capable of recalling every motion and placement in space while turning a forward somersault to a backward somersault with a twist in the middle thirty feet above ground to make a perfect hand catch with someone who is already in motion? Ernie Lane was such a man. "Ernest Ward is one of two men in the business," the *Daily Bulletin* stated on March 9, 1917, "who does successfully a triple somersault the other being Ernest Clark of the Clarkonians." Ernie first accomplished the triple in 1916. His photograph was featured with the Hagenbeck-Wallace ad in the May 6, 1916 *Billboard*.

The same *Daily Bulletin* article described the Ward act of 1917:

They use the famous triple flying trapeze in their act the seven actors being divided into four leapers and three catchers. . . Eddie Ward occupies the middle trapeze while the two outside catchers are Myrtle and Mayme. The leaping is done by William, Ernest, Alec, and Jennie. . .

Though the Wards were the only act in the business which was using a triple wide rigging they were now using only one pedestal board. Eddie was willing to experiment from one year to the next and the scope of his imagination was innovative in reaching for more sensational appeal. "The Flying Ward act has

someone in the air all the time except when the features are being done."

Besides their flying return act the Wards also did their double trapeze act and "The Misses Ward on the tight wire." The winter of 1917-1918 the Wards again toured Cuba.<sup>28</sup>

In June of 1918 Billie Summers married Myrtle Darling. Billie had always been made up as a woman to dress up the act since an act with more women was considered to have more audience appeal. This practice was not unusual among flying acts. The Siegrist-Silbons had used a man in woman's costume since the early 1900's. No doubt, this caused a few raised eyebrows in those days, just as it would today. The marriage of Billie and Myrtle should have put to rest any speculations as to his inclinations.

After four years on the road with Hagenbeck-Wallace the Wards were familiar with the daily routine of packing up and moving day-by-day. What seemed like disorder and pandemonium to the uneducated "townner" in the hustle and bustle of daily circus life was to the Wards a methodical routine on the road with Hagenbeck-Wallace in June of 1918.

In the early morning darkness on a crossover track in a wooded area near Ivanhoe, Indiana, the Ward troupe was bedded down in their old wooden sleeper, the third car from the rear in the second section of the circus train. Eddie and Mayme were sleeping in a berth below that of Billie and Myrtle Summers. Alec and Jennie were in a berth adjacent to Eddie and Mayme. Suddenly there was a blast of noise and a violent jolt. An instant later their coach was blown apart. Debris was thrown for fifteen yards adjacent to the tracks

**The Flying Wards in 1917. Left to right: Myrtle Darling (?), Eddie Ward, Mayme Ward, Alec Todd, Jennie Ward Todd, Ernie Lane, and Billie Summers. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.**



as an empty military troop train struck them from the rear, demolishing the circus train on impact. The engine and coal tender of the troop train plowed through and over the wreckage of the circus coaches.<sup>29</sup> A detailed analysis of the wreck was made by Warren A. Reeder in 1972:

. . . the impact of the locomotive split through the caboose, the next three sleeping cars and part of the fourth car before coming to a stop as described by manager Charles Gollmar.

Estimates vary from eye-witnesses, but it is evident the locomotive drove through these cars 400 to 500 feet before coming to a complete stop.

The locomotive literally rolled up all cars and bodies pushing them up under the fourth sleeper, Mr. Gollmar's car.

No bodies were pinned under the wreck behind the path of the engine, all being found in a comparatively small pile of wreckage just in front of the side of the troop train engine as it halted slightly crosswise over the eastbound main line track and lay in a slant in a southwesterly direction.<sup>30</sup>

The *Daily Bulletin* of June 24, 1918 described the sequence of events which followed. Eddie Ward crawled from beneath the splintered debris. He could hear the moans of pain, the screams, the frantic cries for help from those still trapped within the wreckage. Already fire was sweeping through the wooden rubble. He first pulled Mayme free. Then he managed to uncover Jennie and drag her out. Picking his way through the rubble he dug the rest of his people out one by one from the scattered wreckage of their coach, first Billie Summers and his wife, then Alec Todd. Bess Catannah and her husband Zeb were in a stateroom in another part of the train.

Gus Lindstrom, who had been working as a property man with the show, awoke to see the huge locomotive listing over him in the darkness spewing a hail of sparks over him. The man who had been sleeping beside him was killed outright, while a pile of mattresses nearby had cushioned the impact, saving Gus's life. At the same time, Mary Enos, of the Enos perch act, also of Bloomington, together with Lon Moore, a circus clown, were working desperately to dig her husband, Gene, free from the wreckage. She dug him out with her bare hands.

Those who were able struggled desperately in their night clothes through the acrid drifting smoke in the darkness to free those victims who were still trapped before the raging fire swept over them. In some cases all that could be done was to stand by helplessly as loved ones were burned to death. In the end most of those who perished were found to have suffered only superficial injuries before being burned beyond recognition. Among those indistinguishable remains were Bessie and her husband.<sup>31</sup>

Back home in Bloomington Eddie's mother had received a message from Jennie on Friday morning stating that she hoped to be home on Sunday for a short visit. On Saturday evening



she received another message stating that Jennie was dead. Eddie later stated that she was killed instantly. Ironically, she was not found to be seriously injured, but probably died of shock. Though most of the dead were buried together at Woodlawn Cemetery in south Chicago Jennie's body was returned to Bloomington. Other members of the troupe, including Gus Lindstrom, were treated at nearby hospitals and released.<sup>32</sup>

Mayme's account of her experience, given to Warren Reeder fifty years later, is a graphic description of the trauma and confusion of the event:

Mayme Ward was suddenly jolted back into an uncomprehending consciousness from a deep sleep. For one fleeting moment she felt as if she were a contortionist. While she was on her back, her mattress had folded tightly and completely back—she was painfully aware that her feet were clear above her head, and she was in a rigid and immobile position.

Almost stifled, she heard her husband Ed ask in a strangled tone, "You all right?"

In muffled tones she uncertainly affirmed that she was. "But I can't move," she said.

He gathered his trained muscles in a straining upward thrust, and she gradually wormed her way out into the aisle from her berth. A moment later he also wriggled free.

The floor was a mass of jagged splinters, but they did not notice it at the time. The roof of the car had slid down upon their side, crushing down the upper berth onto them.

Mayme heard a voice from above them. "Give me your hand—I'll pull you up." It was Charlie Rooney, the bareback rider, looking for his sister. Miraculously, like many others, she had been thrown clear out of the car unharmed, but no one knew of it at the moment.

As Mayme went up her long braided hair caught onto projecting fragments of wood. "I didn't know you were so heavy," Rooney panted, jerking harshly. Her hair parted company with her scalp, and she was suddenly up in the cool night air.

In the dim dawning light she stared at chaos.

Utter chaos.

What was a locomotive doing just opposite her, tilted slightly away and breathing out steam heavily? Why was she staring downward from a height above a telegraph pole? There was the 4th car from the end, not counting the caboose. Where were the other cars?

What was all this mass of steel, smoke and where was the ominous red glow coming from, just beginning to crackle like a wooden bonfire? Did she imagine she heard screams, piteous cries for help?

Ed Ward pushed her roughly. "Get up that way," he gestured urgently, "and take care of yourself." Then he

disappeared back into the smoke, steel, and sudden flames, paying no heed to the glass that slashed savagely at his bare feet.

Mayme crawled free painfully, vaguely noting that the wooden coaches, what was left of them, were "burning like a paper box." It was either from the oil lamps at the ends of the sleeping cars—or was it the coals from the huge panting locomotive?

Fred Legett, the equestrian director, was now at her side. "I... can't... breathe," he gasped hoarsely. Every rib was broken, but he did not know it.

A numbing flash of pain struck her, and she now looked down at her feet.

Every toe was dislocated—no two pointed in the same direction, creating a crazy pattern of unreality. She pointed in disbelief.

"Don't... make... me... laugh," he almost sobbed.



The Flying Wards in 1919 and 1920 in vaudeville. Left to right: Ernie Lane, Bert Doss, and Eddie Ward. Lane's brilliant career ended tragically in 1921 when he died in a fall while on Sells-Floto. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

That morning newspapers across the country brushed aside the news of the great conflict which was raging overseas to crowd the front pages with reports of the wreck which had taken the lives of seventy or more showfolk and injured a hundred and fifty. The following day automobiles blocked the roadway for miles along the country road adjacent to the tracks where the accident had taken place. All that remained of the personal possessions and living quarters was a smoldering tract of blackened debris fifteen yards wide and two hundred yards long.

The *Daily Bulletin* of June 25, 1918 carried the following explanation of how the accident had occurred:

... the circus train which carried four sleepers, five stock cars, fifteen flat cars, and a caboose, pulled part way in-

to a switch, and stalled there on account of a hot box. The flagman went back on the main track and set fuses as a warning of danger. The circus train was in this position when the equipment train plowed into the sleepers reducing them to a pile of tangled steel and timbers. Fire, engendered by the gas lighting system of the train, broke out almost immediately.

These were the days when railroad men were expected to work for days on end with little rest. The engineer of the empty troop train which had struck them was later arrested on charges of manslaughter, accused of having fallen asleep at the throttle. In the courtroom Alec Todd "wept openly, claiming that it was 'terrible that this old man is being tried for his life when it was actually the railroad's fault.'" The case against engineer Alonzo Sargent ended in a hung jury.<sup>33</sup>

Eddie had gone on after freeing the members of his own troupe to save others. Lon Moore later related how his arms had been "pinioned" to his sides within the wreckage. "I looked up through a little hole in the roof and there was someone clawing at it with his bare hands to make it bigger." It was Eddie who had pulled him out.<sup>34</sup> Eddie helped to rescue Mary Enos and was badly burned while trying to save four women who were "pinned in two benches." The June 24 *Daily Pantagraph* did not state whether or not Eddie was successful in attempting to rescue these women, but Eddie's remarks were discouraging: "I saw the flames cre(e)p on them and heard their maddening cries. They ring in my ears in this quiet hospital ward. They will always ring in my ears." Whether Eddie was later to share Alec's opinion that the accident was not the engineer's fault or not, his statement at the time was full of resentment. "I wish," he said, "that engineer who caused those... deaths of as fine people that ever lived, had burned into his brain the sights I saw." This was obviously a traumatic experience for Eddie. Mickey King, who worked with the Wards in the 1920's, states that it was generally understood that Eddie's health had steadily declined after the accident.<sup>35</sup> Of the Ward troupe only Billie and Myrtle Summers stayed with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus that season following the accident, Eddie stating at the time that they had "quit the show business forever." And on August 6 while performing with the show in Racine, Wisconsin, Billie Summers broke his leg in turning a triple into the net, and the Summers were forced to leave the show as well.<sup>36</sup>

In March of 1919 the Ward troupe and the Eugene Enos troupe filed a joint law suit against the Michigan Central Railroad but were never able to collect any damages in their case against the railroad.<sup>37</sup>

Eddie might have been sincere when he said that he would not perform again. The Wards did not work with a circus unit for the next two years. Although a *Decatur Herald* article of November 13, 1932 stated that the Wards had worked parks and fairs during 1919 and 1920, the Wards are found working the vaudeville circuit at the beginning of the tent season of 1920. They were billed in Bloomington as





a flying act of three hometown boys. It is possible that the "Aeroplane Girls" iron jaw act which followed the Wards at the Majestic Theater the rest of that week was the female contingent of the Ward troupe. The three man flying act was made up of Eddie, Bert Doss, and Ernie Lane.<sup>38</sup>

When asked in 1927 why he stayed in the business the first thing which came to Eddie's mind was the wreck of 1918. "I was in the 1918 railroad wreck near Gary that killed my sister and another girl in our company and jammed up everyone else in the act. I've hung my head downward longer than any man on earth," Eddie said, referring to his position on the catchbar. He went on to say that he could retire if he wanted. "I don't have to do a lot of things that are difficult, dangerous, and sometimes disagreeable. But a fellow gets a kick out of doing any star act. It's great stuff while it lasts."<sup>39</sup> And so the Wards came back to the circus in 1921 after their two year absence determined to stick with it as long as it would last. The American Circus Corporation was formed in 1921 by Jerry Mugivin and Bert Bowers, and was comprised of John Robinson's Ten Big Shows, Sells-Floto, and Hagenbeck-Wallace. At its peak in the 20's the American Circus Corporation provided stiff competition for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. In 1921 Eddie Ward first contracted to provide various acts for the American Circus Corporation.

It was not unusual for circuses to employ outstanding acts for their opening engagement which were not intended to tour with the circus during the regular season. In 1921 the Flying Wards were to open with The Sells-Floto Circus at the Coliseum in Chicago, and tour with the Robinson Show for the rest of the season. Eddie enlarged the new act from seven to nine people, the new troupe consisting of Eddie, Mayme, Nellie Sullivan, Bert Doss, Jessie and Jim Arbaugh, Paul Sullivan, and two other women, and Ernie Lane was with them at the beginning of the season. Having lost Jennie as a star flyer, Mayme moved from the catchbar to the flybar. In time she would become known as one of the most outstanding women flyers in the business. According to Clyde Noble, Mayme was the first woman to successfully complete a double somersault to a hand catch.<sup>40</sup>

One of the flying acts which toured with the Sells-Floto show that year was the Beckman-Todd troupe. Most likely Alec Todd had

**Forward over passing leap. Left to right: Ernie Lane, Jim Arbaugh, and Eddie Ward. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.**

teamed up with the Beckman Brothers of Quincy, Illinois, whom he had worked with on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show in 1914.

The two "other women" with the Wards in 1921 were probably Mable and Erma Hubble. The Hubble sisters, Erma Hubble, Mable Hubble, and Jessie Arbaugh (wife of Jim Arbaugh) had come to Bloomington from Peoria, Illinois, to train with the Wards. Jessie and Jim later formed their own flying act, the Flying Arbaughs, which was a regular feature with the Tom Mix Circus in later years. Mable Hubble adopted the name of Ward also, though later she married C.A. Pelke, a member of the concessions department with Ringling Bros., and performed as Mable Pelke, and later as Mrs. Tom Mix. Erma Hubble took the professional name of Erma Ward and had a long and illustrious career as a solo performer. According to an article by Bob Taber in the March-April 1951 *Bandwagon* Erma Ward had "joined out" in 1920 at the age of 16 at a time when her family was encouraging her to attend a music conservatory in the East. She became a star performer within three months. As time went by her accomplishments as a solo performer would become more and more remarkable.

Eddie Ward later related a story to Earl May about a girl whom he had "joined out" from Peoria in about 1922:

She was young and slender and strong enough, and she went through the preliminary work so well that I put her into the regular act in 1924. That was pretty short training for a flying act... Flying and somersaulting seemed to come naturally to her. Moreover, she had plenty of nerve.

But she couldn't get her mind off her audience. She had good looks and knew how to sell herself, so she was always in a hurry to get back to her perch to take her bow. Finally she got to looking sideways at her audience as she swung toward me on her bar. That made a great impression on her audience but it didn't make a hit with me...

Eddie went on to relate that it took a bad fall into the net to bring her into line. Eddie did not name this Peoria girl with a gift for show-

manship but it might well have been one of the Hubble sisters.

Other members of the Ward troupe in 1921 were also destined to forge careers with the circus. Paul Sullivan and his wife, Nellie, later formed the Flying Sullivans. In later years they worked closely with Herb and Rose Fleming, who were to join the Wards later. The Sullivans worked with a young catcher in the late 1920's named George Valentine who later formed a troupe of his own called the Flying Valentinos. Bert Doss later teamed up with Harold Voise to form the Flying Thrillers.

Just as these young performers were launching their careers one of the most talented stars of trapeze performance was suddenly extinguished. Ernie Lane took a bad fall into the net during practice before the opening of The Sells-Floto Circus at the Coliseum in Chicago. The *Daily Pantagraph* of April 9, 1921 reported that "Lane fell in such a way that the back of his head hit the net first. He probably also fell with a twist." Eddie later told Mickey King that Ernie had "overturned a triple." The momentum of a flyer on his third somersault renders him particularly vulnerable to falls if the trick is missed because he has so little time to come out of the tuck position and make a proper landing in the net. Eddie stated that one reason for Ernie missing the trick was because it was an extremely hot day to be working in the top of the Coliseum and Ernie's hands were wet from perspiration, causing him to slip from the flybar too early.<sup>41</sup>

The *Billboard* of April 16, 1921 covered the events which followed the accident as follows:

He was carried to his dressing room by W.J. (Slim) Allen, who was watching the rehearsal and heard Lane groan after striking the net. It was assumed that an artery was bursted, as no broken bones or displaced ligaments in the neck or back were discovered.

The *Daily Pantagraph* of April 9 covered the incident differently, however.

Lane got down out of the net and made his way to his hotel, realizing that he had got a hard jolt, but totally unaware of the seriousness of the accident. Not till Friday morning did the Wards decide that Lane must go to the hospital.

The doctors discovered that the base of the brain was badly injured, and in spite of treatment he grew worse until death ensued.

Regardless of how it happened, Ernie was now dead at age twenty-two at the height of his career. The *Pantagraph* went on to chronicle his career. Ernie was born in Butler, Georgia, about 1897, so the article ran. George W. Valentine, founder of the original Flying Valentinos troupe, had picked Ernie up in Atlanta in 1908 and broken him in with his flying return act. Ernie had worked with the Valentinos until 1913, when he joined Clyde Noble's troupe, the Flying Fishers. In 1915 he left the Fishers to work with the Wards, where he remained—with the exception of his time in the military—until his death.

One can only guess where Lane's career might have taken him if not for his untimely



death. The *Billboard* of April 16, 1921 called him "one of the most skilled artists in a highly skilled act."

From 1922 on the Wards maintained two separate flying acts which sometimes traveled with separate circuses of the American Circus Corporation, one called The Flying Wards and the other The Ward-Kimball Troupe. A letter from Eddie to Daniel Odom of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1925 suggests that the name "Ward-Kimball Troupe" was not used until 1925, however. Eddie stated, "We will call the act by the name of Ward-Kimball Troupe if it is O.K. with you."<sup>42</sup> When traveling with separate circuses each troupe was likely to be featured with another flying act in the same display on the circus program. In 1922 both troupes had nine persons each. In addition to the flying act the John Robinson Show also featured the following Ward acts: Display 6, Miss Ward/Miss Ward, cloud swings; Display 12, the Four Kimball Sisters; and Display 16, the Four Ward Sisters. Flying acts were usually presented toward the end of the program as the climax of the program partly because of the sensational aspect of their presentation and partly to economize on the time and space in setting up and tearing down of the rigging. The Wards flying act was presented as Display 20 with Mayme the featured flyer. The Kimball Sisters were Mayme and her cousin, well known aerialist and equestrienne Jennie Rooney, who had been with her in the Hines-Kimball Troupe, plus two other girls from the Ward clan.<sup>43</sup>

The Wards' other flying act went with The Sells-Floto Circus in 1922, Display 20 on the program. The Wards probably contributed flyers to the other flying act on the show as well, which was called the Ward-Hanfords and consisted of five persons. One other Ward act with Sells-Floto in 1922 was a solo perch act by Eddie appearing on the program as "Eddie Ward, Difficult Diversions," Display 10. Altogether there were a total of fourteen Ward performers with Sells-Floto in 1922.

The various Ward acts such as "The Ward Sisters" and "The Kimball Sisters" might perform any kind of act from wire walking, to aerial ladders, to web (tricks performed on a vertical rope with a loop), cloud swings (swinging tricks done on a horizontal rope), "golden girl on the golden whirl" (loop-de-loop), single trapeze, or iron jaw. Among others with Eddie Ward on the Sells-Floto Show in 1922 were Bea Ward (Bea Star), Frank Ward (?), Lester Ward (Les Thomas), George Ward (George Reed), and Billy Ward. Billie Summers had left the troupe after 1918 and the "Billy Ward" named in the Sells-Floto route book must have been someone else.

In spite of the demands placed on the performers with Eddie's troupes there was time for recreation. Mayme was captain of the women's softball team with the Robinson Show in 1922 and the Hubble sisters also played on the team.<sup>44</sup>

In 1923 both of Eddie's flying acts were with Sells-Floto. Both were featured in Display 19: Ten Flying Wards/Ten Flying Wards. In Display 6 Mayme and Erma Ward were featured doing cloud swings. Aerial ladders included Lillian Ward (Lillie Arbuckle), Beatrice Ward (Bea Star), Mable Ward, and

others who were not with the Ward troupe. Eddie's troupe that year included Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Fisher (Bob Musselman), Mr. and Mrs. Jimmie Ward (Jim Arbaugh), Mr. and Mrs. Herb Ward (Herb Fleming), Mr. and Mrs. Paul Ward (Paul Sullivan), and Mable, Erma, Bea, Lillie, Bert, and Lester as mentioned before. Bob Musselman formed his own troupe the following year which he called the Fearless Flyers. Les Thomas formed the Flying Lesters. The Flemings' last year with the Wards was 1923. Herb Fleming had broken in with Harry LaVan in 1920 and had worked with the Flying Fishers before joining the Wards. Rose married Herb the same year. They later formed the Flying Flemings. Bea Star later distinguished herself as a solo aerialist as well. This was the first year on Sells-Floto for young Mickey Comeau, who had run away from her home in Greenfield, Massachusetts, to join the circus. Eddie took her into the troupe that same year.<sup>45</sup>

The year 1924 saw the entire Ward troupe with Sells-Floto once again, both flying acts featured in Display 19; with Mayme, Lillian, Erma, Nellie, Bea, and others in Display 6, aerial ballet. Mickey Comeau married lion tamer Alan King that year and began performing under the name Mickey King. Mickey states that she was to be featured in a stunt called "The Leap of Death" that year. She would leap off of the crane bar over the rigging to be caught by the catcher. They practiced the trick several times in the barn in Bloomington and she enjoyed it. She was so enthusiastic, in fact, that she once jumped so high in taking her dive that she struck her head on the rafters overhead and fell into the net like a rag doll . . . out cold. "That's the last time we do that," Eddie said.<sup>46</sup>

Mickey has many happy memories of working with the Wards in those years. The unmarried women with the act lived in the house with Eddie and Mayme on East Emerson Street, which had acquired the nickname "The Grand Hotel." The house has since been turned into a restaurant and is still known by that name. Drinks are served at the bar in the same spot which the girls used as a sewing room to make costumes for the act. Mickey recalls how Eddie used to frolic with the girls on the front porch throwing them off into the snowdrifts. When asked whether or not Mayme was ever jealous of Eddie spending so much time with so many beautiful girls Mickey doesn't hesitate to say, "Oh, my yes," and who wouldn't be? But she quickly injected, "There was nothing to it. Eddie was always a gentleman." He was "like a father figure" and the Ward troupe was like a family. "Eddie never ordered us to do anything," Mickey said, "he persuaded you." Once when Mickey, Erma, and one of the other girls came in late Eddie was waiting up for them. "Now you girls know that you are going to be stars," he said, "and you have to get your rest if you want to perform at your peak." Mickey still refers to Mayme Ward as "Ma Mayme."

Mickey had to leave the Ward troupe before the beginning of the 1925 season, going with her husband, Alan King, on the Lee Bros. Show. She and Alan returned to the Sells-Floto Show in 1926 although Mickey was not a part of the Ward troupe at that time.



The Flying Wards, circa 1925. Left to right: Mable Hubble, Jessie Arbaugh, Paul Sullivan, Mayme Ward, Marjorie Reed, Eddie Ward, Nellie Sullivan, Jim Arbaugh, and Irma Ward (Hubble). Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

The winter of 1924-25 the Wards must have been playing Shrine circus dates, as a letter from Eddie to Daniel Odom stated, "We work next at Wichita at the Shrine Show."<sup>47</sup>

In the Sells-Floto program of 1925 the displays were not numbered. The Wards were listed as the sole flying act. Mayme and Nellie were featured doing one arm swings; and Eva Ward (?), Lillian, Bea, May Ward (?), and others were doing ladders. The Kimball Sisters were featured as "iron jaw butterflies." According to a March 6, 1925 *Pantagraph* article the Wards had three flying acts in 1925, two Flying Ward troupes with Sells-Floto and the Ward-Kimballs with Hagenbeck-Wallace. Marjorie Reed had left the Siegrist-Silbon Troupe to join the Wards that year.<sup>48</sup> The performers with the first Ward troupe were George and Marjorie Reed, Nellie Sullivan, Elsie Darr, Erma Ward, and Rose Sullivan. Those in the second Ward troupe with Sells-Floto were Ralph DuVal, Paul Sullivan, Harold Voise, Lester Thomas, Irene Ward, and Bea Star, with Eddie and Mayme working with one or the other of these two troupes. The Ward-Kimball Troupe was made up of Jim and Jessie Arbaugh, Herb and Rose Fleming, Orda Brandon, Agnes Marine, and John Galvith. Rose Sullivan later married Clayton Behee and performed with him with the Flying Codonas and the Flying Behees. Her sister, Eileen, joined the Ward troupe shortly afterward. Harold Voise had come from Saginaw, Michigan, where he had worked with the Flying Melzoras. In later years Ralph DuVal and his wife toured with their trained dog act. Orda Brandon later married Joe Masker and they formed a bar act together which toured parks and fairs. As late as 1938 the Maskers were still returning to Bloomington to spend the winter months. Agnes Marine later married Bert Doss and made a name for herself as a solo performer. It was also stated that Erma Ward had broken Lilian Leitzel's record of one arm swings, having turned two hundred at one time. In a letter to Orrin Davenport dated November 2, 1925 Eddie offered Erma's act





The Ward-Kimball troupe in 1925 or 1926 while on Hagenbeck-Wallace. Left to right: Rose Fleming, John Galvin, Agnes Marine, Herb Fleming, Jessie Arbaugh, and Orda Brandon. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

for the Detroit Shrine Show for forty-five hundred dollars for two weeks. Erma was obviously considered to be a box office attraction.<sup>49</sup>

In his letter to Daniel Odom of February 10 Eddie volunteered four girls for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus along with the Ward-Kimball Troupe to do swinging ladders and ride in the menage act although they had never ridden before, but he requested that the three men be excused from parade as "they ought to be out taking care of the riggan [sic]." Odom, in reply, excused the men from parade as Eddie had requested, and included the women in swinging ladders and menage.

In the same letter Eddie requests including a "Miss Greibel" who wanted to join his act. Odom answered that he would like to include Miss Greibel but hesitated "on account being short many riders." Evidently Miss Greibel was one of the riders with the show. "I will trade you Miss Greibel," Odom went on, "if you can get me a girl to rind mang. I do not want a fat girl and a fair looker Eddie."

In another letter to Odom dated April 17, 1925 Eddie stated that "In the Ward-Kimball Troupe there will be tow [sic] married couples, two single girls, and one single man. You will oblige me very much if you place the girls across from Mr. James Arbaugh." <sup>50</sup>

Mickey King describes a rigging which the Wards owned which had belonged to the family of the great aerialist Lilian Leitzel, the Lehmy trapeze rigging. A bicycle was mounted atop a large crane bar. A rectangular frame pivoted to either side of the crane bar supported two trapeze bars so that as the frame turned in a vertical direction the trapeze performers revolved with it ferris wheel fashion. In the center of the frame a single web hung from the bar on which the frame was pivoted. The crane bar and frame were lit with various colored lights so that when the frame was set in motion with girls doing single trap routines, web, and Mayme peddling the bicycle above appearing to propel the apparatus, the effect was spectacular. At the conclusion of the act the three performers dropped into the net below and Mayme made a swan dive off of the bicycle seat far above. An electrical problem developed which made it necessary to discontinue its use in 1927. <sup>51</sup>

Eddie had mentioned the Lehmy rigging in his letter to Odom: "Mr. Mugimin [sic] told me to ask Mr. Earle [sic] if he wished the other act to go in the building [probably the Coliseum in Chicago] until the show opens, instead of the Leamy Act." He again mentioned the Lehmy act to Orrin Davenport in the winter season of 1925-26, and Eddie offered the act to Zack Terrell once more in a letter dated February 21, 1927 stating that "I could use the three girls on it and let Erma finish with the swings which would make a Bit [big] hit . . . and it can work alone. Can you let me use Mickey in it for the Bldg."

During the winter of 1925-26 Eddie offered Orrin Davenport two eight person flying acts, four ladders, two cloud swings, Erma Ward's act, the Lehmy act, and "if you can place the mule act you have seen them also." <sup>52</sup> This was the trained mule act which Eddie's brother Elzie had put together.

In spring of 1926 Eddie and nine of his people performed with the Minneapolis Shrine Show before the Wards opened in April with the Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace Shows which combined for the opening performance in Chicago. The personnel as listed in the *Pantagraph* of March 20, 1926: Edward and Mayme Ward, Erma Ward, all of Bloomington; Rose and Eileen Sullivan of Holyoke, Massachusetts; Harold Voise, Saginaw, Michigan; Agnes Marine of Denver; and Lillie Arbuckle of Tampa, Florida. With Hagenbeck-Wallace were Jim and Jessie Arbaugh, Herb and Rose Fleming, and Billie Ward, all of Bloomington; Elsie Darr and Irene Ward of Chicago; and Orda Brandon of Toledo, Ohio. Orda Brandon also worked as a

A youthful Arthur Vasconcellos in 1928, two years after beginning his distinguish career in show business with Eddie Ward. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.



catcher for the Flying Flemings in later years. It was also stated that Mayme was doing a blindfolded double somersault to a hand catch, Jim Arbaugh a "double full twister," and Bert Doss "double fall back twister." The article stated again that Erma Ward held the record for consecutive one arm swings with 227, and that Elzie Ward, Billy Dawes, and Joe Craig would take the trained mule act out to play fairs. <sup>53</sup>

In April of 1926 Art Vasconcellos (later shortened to Concello) joined the Wards. Like many other young Bloomington boys Art had broken in at the Y.M.C.A. under Harry LaMar (Harry Foreman). Some of the boys from the Y.M.C.A. had put together acrobatic routines and played at the men's clubs around Bloomington. Walt Graybeal recalls working in such an act with Art Vasconcellos, Red Sleeter, and others. A few years later Walt broke in with one of the pioneers of American trapeze, Harry LaVan, and went on to pursue a career as a first-rate flyer himself. In those days, Walt relates, Eddie Ward often dropped in at the Y.M.C.A. scouting out the local talent. Apparently Eddie had had his eye on Art for some time. "That's my boy," Eddie would say whenever he saw Art. "Come and see me when you're ready to join the act." Mickey King implies that Mayme might have been reluctant, at first, to take Art into the group since Art seemed to have a reputation as a young rebel in those days. But Eddie wanted him. He recognized the tremendous potential in this lad and he knew how to develop it. <sup>54</sup>

This was also the year that twenty year old Francis Reiner joined the Wards and Eddie broke him in as catcher. Reiner was to become one of the most sought after catchers in the business. Mickey tells the story of how Reiner came by the nickname of "Gooch." Some of the fellows who practiced at the Ward barn often played practical jokes on the girls such as tying a rope to their wardrobe trunks and hoisting them up into the rafters, holding the goods for ransom in exchange for some innocent display of affection. One day a few of the girls decided to turn the tables on Francis by stuffing his tights with rags and straw, putting a "funny head" on the effigy, and wiring it up to the catchbar with a sign across its chest which read "The Great Gooch." When Reiner came in looking for his practice tights and protesting that he couldn't work without them all the girls played innocent. "What do you mean?" they answered, "You've been working up there for some time now," indicating the scarecrow aloft. From that time on Reiner was called "Gooch Reiner." <sup>55</sup>

In 1925 Billie Ward joined the troupe. Ward was Billie's actual name though he was not related to Eddie. Billie, a nephew of the famous clown Earl Shipley, was from Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Shipley had come to Eddie requesting that he take Billie into the troupe. In later years Billie toured with his wife Virginia, as the Imperial Illingtons. When Billie finally retired from flying he went into clowning using the same makeup which his uncle, Earl, had used. About this time Clayton Behee also joined the Wards. Clayton later gained recognition as the man who replaced Alfredo Codona with the Flying Codonas when Alfredo was injured. <sup>56</sup>





The Harvard of the flying trapeze, the Eddie Ward barn on East Emerson Street, Bloomington, Illinois. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

"The Famous Wards" were listed as the flying act in Display 21 of the Sells-Floto Program of 1926. Display 11 featured The Kimball Sisters, The Hubble Sisters, and others. Though Mickey King was not with the Wards this year she was with the Sells-Floto Show and worked along side of her friends on swinging ladders (an act which was always called "chambermaids") in Display 6, an assorted aerial number in Display 11, and a riding act in Display 18. Again in 1926 Elzie was taking the trained mule act out on the road.

Mickey King relates how she rejoined the Ward troupe. She had been working on her own since her marriage to Alan King in 1924. In 1927 Mickey rode a horse called Freddie the Whip on the Sells-Floto Show, a huge sleek animal, in a broad jump with a twenty-four foot nine inch hurdle spread. Freddie the Whip had somersaulted twice on separate occasions, sending two expert riders, Ruby Orton and Charlie Brown, to the hospital with serious injuries. Freddie had earned a bad reputation. One evening on taking her jump Mickey felt the horse begin to buckle, but she was alert to his tricks and she quickly drew him up with a hard pull on the reins to pull him out of it. Almost the entire circus company witnessed the incident from the wings. Ruby and Charlie rushed out to the track with tears in their eyes. "Eddie came out," Mickey says, "and put his arm around my shoulders. 'You're coming back with me,' he said. I didn't ride again until I went to Australia years later."<sup>57</sup>

The winter of 1926-27 the Wards were again working Shrine dates. In a letter to Zack Terrell dated February 11 Eddie stated, "I am going to go out with Harvey if he puts the money in the bank. I got a long distance call from Cleveland asking if I will be there. We are supposed to open in Des Moines the 21 of the month."<sup>58</sup>

In 1927 Bob Fisher's (Musselman) troupe combined with the Sullivans to perform opposite the Ward Flyers in Display 19 of the Sells-Floto Circus at the Coliseum in Chicago. Eddie Ward had a part in placing Fisher and Sullivan with Sells-Floto that year. Originally he had proposed teaming the Sullivans up with Harry LaVan's troupe but later stated that he would scout out Bob Fisher's stage

act if they came to Bloomington to practice. He wrote to Zack Terrell on February 7:

I was talking to Bob Fisher and Paul Sullivan. Bobby has five people and Paul Sullivan has 3 people. He worked along with Clark [Clarke] last year over with the RB Show. Neither of them have a Circus Riggins and they will work together if I will let them have an entry Riggins and they want me to put the act together.

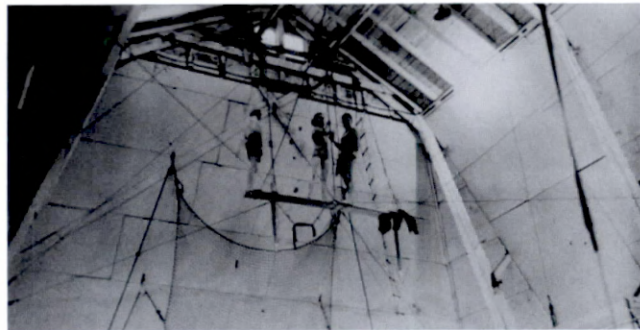
The name of Clarke held a lot of prestige in the circus world and Eddie's reference to Fisher working with the Clarkonians was a bit of salesmanship. Eddie offered the act to Terrell for nine hundred dollars per week for providing the act on such short notice, but another letter to Terrell dated February 11 stated:

... they [Fisher and Sullivan] want me to put the act together and practice in my Bldg and it will cost me lots to get the act ready ... Bobby wants Eight Hundred for the Bldg [the Coliseum engagement] and Paul Sullivan wants four Hundred for the Bldg. You know the [that] getting the Riggins Ready for the Bldg it cost a lot and a lot of hard work. The price I give you for the Hold think [whole thing] 1800.00 is the best I can do By the time I get it so it looks like a act.

Though Fisher stated that he would be working for Eddie, "he to furnish the rigging, I will furnish the people" he wanted it "understood that the title and Billing of the act is to be the Fearless Flyer Sullivan Troupe and not the Wards of any name pertaining [sic] to it." Fisher had organized his act some years before and now felt that his troupe deserved recognition as being distinct and separate from the Wards.<sup>59</sup>

Other features of Sells-Floto that year included Aerial Ballet, Display 6, with Agnes, Lillian, Mickey, Eileen Sullivan (who later married Wayne Larey and subsequently Harold Voise), and others. Erma Ward was featured in her solo act, Display 12. This was Bert Doss and Harold Voise's final year with the Wards before forming their own troupe, The Flying Thrillers. Eddie wrote to Zack Terrell December 4, 1927, "I here [sic] that Bert and Harold is going with Barnes next season."<sup>60</sup>

This same year, Mickey King's sister, Antoinette Comeau, joined the Wards. The story is often repeated that Antoinette was on her way to college when she stopped to visit



Interior of the Ward Barn in Bloomington, Illinois. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

Mickey along the way. This visit, the story goes, turned into a career for the young co-ed. Mickey states, however, that Antoinette had already been to school at St. Mary's in Burlington, Vermont. She left the school and intercepted Mickey in Detroit in the middle of the season to ask Mickey to get her a job with the circus. Though Eddie didn't need another person in the act he hired Antoinette as a personal favor to Mickey. Eddie had no way of knowing that Antoinette would develop into one of the greatest, if not the greatest, woman flyer of all time. Eddie broke her in as a catcher with the troupe.<sup>61</sup>

In 1928 the two Ward flying troupes again split up to travel with separate circuses. The Ward-Kimball Troupe was featured with Hagenbeck-Wallace in Display 18 with the Ward Sisters doing an iron jaw routine in Display 10. That year Paul and Nellie Sullivan were again working with Bob Fisher's troupe as the Fisher-Sullivans in Display 17 of the Sells-Floto program along with the Clarkonians and the Nine Flying Wards. Eddie told Terrell that Mayme had broken a couple of small bones in her foot and was unable to do the wire work. It was anticipated, however, that she would recuperate before the show opened. Eddie stated, "I will put the wire in the Bldg if nothing happen(s)." Terrell returned a contract for an eight person flying act and a wire act for the Coliseum for eighteen hundred dollars per week.<sup>62</sup>

In Display 7 of the Sells-Floto program were the "Aerial Butterflies" iron jaw act featuring The Three Kimball Sisters and others. Erma Ward was again featured in Display 11 doing a solo routine. Eddie wrote requesting Terrell to employ Lillian Arbuckle's husband so that he could use her in his act. "I can use her very well as she does her work well, and always looks nice." He apologized for the request stating that "I don't like to go against the rules of the show but I will appreciate this favor."<sup>63</sup>

Mickey King recalls working with Antoinette and Irene Ward in their aerial butterflies iron jaw routine when Irene attempted to pull herself up to adjust her mouthpiece and somehow lost her grip. Their rigging was constructed in such a way that Mickey could not see either of the other girls, but from the crowd noises she could tell that someone had fallen. She looked down to see that the girl had suffered a compound leg fracture, but it



wasn't until she was brought down that she realized that the victim was Irene and not Antoinette. This act was to be followed soon after with a wire walking routine in which Mickey and another girl carried Mayme across the wire on their shoulders. Mickey was so shaken by the accident that Mayme had to slap her across the face to bring her out of her stupor. "Snap out of it," Mayme said. "You can't let this thing take you over." When the safety and performance of everyone depended on teamwork there was no room for a weak link. It wasn't a lack of sympathy on Mayme's part which prompted this response, but an act of necessity. Irene died of blood poisoning some time later as a result of this accident.<sup>64</sup>

In 1928 Art Concello married Antoinette Comeau. Together they established the Flying Concellos. In 1929 they were placed on the John Robinson Show.

The year 1929 was a tragic year for the Wards, for in early May Eddie Ward died while with the Robinson Show in Muncie, Indiana. He was forty-three years old. His obituary stated that he had worked the evening before and was discovered in his bed the next morning, dead from jaundice. The year before Eddie had boasted that his people never missed a show due to illness. Not being the sort to expect less of himself than he asked of the others in his troupe, this Spartan rule of self-discipline may have contributed to his own death. Mickey King recalls the dazed feeling which came over her when she learned of Eddie's death. She could hear his words ringing in her ears as if she were sitting opposite him on one of the catchbars: "Man, can't that band leader play that flyin' music!"<sup>65</sup>

It must have been difficult for the Ward troupe to finish out the season after losing Eddie. Mayme now had three children to look after, Eddie Jr., now fourteen years old; Harold, ten; and Genevieve, eight. It became increasingly difficult for Mayme to hold the troupe together as more of Eddie's students struck out on their own. In 1929 the Wards had people performing with three major circuses with the American Circus Corporation.

The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus featured The Ward Sisters doing cloud swings in Display 9, Corene Ward (?) doing one arm swings in Display 12, The Ward Sisters in Display 15, and The Famous Ward Flyers in Display 22. With the John Robinson Show The Ward Sisters were doing cloud swings in Display 6, Miss Stella Ward (?) was doing "Rope Swings" in Display 8, and The Kimball Sisters were featured as iron jaw butterflies. Clayton Behee formed his own troupe that year, the Flying Behees. In August of 1929 the American Circus Corporation was bought out by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, making it the largest monopoly in show business.

In 1930 the Flying Wards were replaced on the Hagenbeck-Wallace program by the Flying Flemings in Display 27, but were still strongly represented on the Sells-Floto program: the Kimball Sisters iron jaw act in Display 8; Rose Sullivan, Rose Ward (?), Pansy Ward (?), and Elsie Darr doing cloud swings in Display 13; Aileen Ward (Eileen Sullivan), Agnes Ward (Agnes Marine), Helen Ward (?), Virginia Ward (wife of Billie Ward), Inez Hubble, and others on aerial ladders in Display 13 also; and The Flying Wards sharing Display 20 with the Flying Thrillers and The Irma Ward Troupe.

In 1931 the Ward troupe was training eighteen new people to replace those who had left. Mayme was still taking aspiring performers under her wing. Her family, business, and professional responsibilities must have been tremendous. Apparently the Wards were working parks and fairs in 1931. An article from the *Daily Pantagraph* stated that "The troupe left last week to fill a two day starting engagement at Naperville, Edward Ward Jr. going in the act for the first time as catcher.

**One of the Ward Flying Troupes, 1927.**  
Left to right: Ralph DuVal, Irene Ward, Jim Arbaugh, Mrs. DuVal, Jessie Arbaugh, Elsie Darr, Billie Ward, and Art Concello. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.



The sextet includes Mayme Ward, director, Eddie Ward Jr., Billie Ward, Joel Craig and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Larey." Mayme also had her daughter, Genevieve, just ten years old, doing a single trapeze and web act for the Y.M.C.A. Circus in March of that year, as well as including one of Elzie's trained mules in the program. Harold Ward, Mayme's second son, was doing a comedy bar act with Art Concello and Billie Ward on the same program. Mayme was trying to maintain the Ward family tradition.<sup>66</sup>

It might be said that Eddie and Mayme had run a "school" for circus performers in their barn on East Emerson Street, although no tuition was paid, no grades or diplomas awarded, and achievement was strictly a matter of personal initiative. But as the young professionals "graduated" to pursue careers of their own after Eddie's death it was impossible for Mayme to keep up with the demand to fill in the gaps in the ranks of the Ward troupe. Soon afterwards she gave up the property on East Emerson Street and eventually she moved to the west coast. Among the students who became a professional in her own right was Mickey King, who in 1931 was working her specialty, aerial ladders, with Hagenbeck-Wallace. Mickey would go on to become a virtuoso standout performer who could fill in with any kind of circus act as well as do the individual aerial acts which were her specialty. On the Sells-Floto roster of 1931 the Flying Thrillers and the Flying Concellos were the featured flying acts and in 1932 Eddie Ward Jr. joined the Flying Thrillers, performing with them for the next two years.<sup>67</sup>

Mayme's troupe, the Flying Wards, performed with Fred Bradna's Circus in the winter of 1931-32. "The Mayme Ward Flying Act" was featured with the Al G. Barnes circus during the regular 1932 season, the troupe consisting of Wayne and Eileen Larey, Francis Reiner, Elsie Darr, Madge and Eldon Day, Joel Craig, Mayme Ward, and Rose Porter. In 1933 the Wards joined Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers to work Shrine dates. It is certain that Mayme was living in Los Angeles at that time and young Harold joined his mother there that year. Later in 1933 Mayme and Pauline Loretta were making plans to form an all girl flying act and bar act. Pauline and her sister, Ora, were the accomplished horizontal bar performers, The Loretta Twins. Ora had married Jack Ernst of Bloomington in 1910 and the sisters had performed with his flying act, The Ernestonians, until his death in 1921 when he took a bad fall into the net just a few days before Ernie Lane's tragic accident. Mayme and Pauline could not form their flying act after all, however, for Pauline was injured in a fall early in 1934. At that time Mayme joined the Clarkonians as catcher for that troupe on the Barnes Show.<sup>68</sup>

In the January-February 1965 *White Tops* Bob Taber wrote a detailed account of the Wards' later career in which he states that Mayme spent five and a half months in Mexico in 1935 with Circo Bell. This would have been during the winter months of that year. During the circus season Mayme was presenting her flying act with the Al G. Barnes Show, listed as "The Famous Flying Wards" on the program in Display 12, but called the





The Flying Concellos on Sells-Floto in 1931. Left to right: Francis Reiner, Antoinette Concello, and Arthur Concello. All three were graduates of Eddie Ward's flying school. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

"Escalante Ward Flying Acts" in *Billboard*. In 1936 Mayme is listed in Display 12 in the Barnes' program working solo doing cloud swings. She also took over the wardrobe department for the ballet with the Barnes Show that year, according to Taber.

Meanwhile in 1931 Mable Pelke (Hubble) had been working with Sells-Floto where cowboy star Tom Mix was the headliner. She and Tom were married in 1932. Tom had formed his own circus and Mable's sister and brother-in-law, the Arbaughs, were featured in the show with their flying troupe. The Arbaughs broke Gus and Betty Bell, of the Bell family of acrobats, in with the flying return act. In 1934 Harold Ward teamed up with Gus Bell to perform for the first time as the Ward-Bell Troupe on the Dill-Mix Show. They wintered that year in Hollywood, California. Thus they completed the cycle from the original Flying Wards to a new generation of flying return artists, the Ward-Bells. From 1935 to 1936 the Ward-Bells were working with the Arbaughs on the Mix show, the troupe consisting in 1936 of Jessie and Jim Arbaugh, Erma Ward, Gus and Betty Bell, Lillian Arbuckle, Julia Asher, and Harold Ward.<sup>69</sup>

In 1936 Eddie Ward Jr. had been working with the Concellos on the Ringling Bros. Show. Eddie was working with one of Art Concello's troupes in 1937, the Artonys, on the Al G. Barnes Show. Eddie kept busy during the 1930's and 1940's working with the various troupes under Art Concello's control. At one time or another Eddie worked as catcher with the Flying Concellos, the Comets, the Artonys, the Fearless Flyers, the Illingtons, and the Flying Burtons.<sup>70</sup>

Taber states that Mayme was working in the wardrobe department of Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1937. Taber also states that the Ward-Bell Troupe was working with Hagenbeck-Wallace that year although the two flying acts listed with the show that year were the LaVards and the Vassards under the management of Oscar Jordan. Taber's information must be correct since both Mayme

and Harold Ward were mentioned under "Dressingroom Gossip" with Hagenbeck-Wallace in the September 25th issue of *Billboard*. Evidently the Ward-Bells were working with one of Oscar Jordan's acts.

In 1938, Taber states, Mayme was working with a flying act on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show. Though *Billboard* reported on May 14, 1938 that the flying acts with Hagenbeck-Wallace were the Flying LaForms and the Escalantes, the June 4 issue stated that Hagenbeck-Wallace opened in Montreal with the Flying Voices and the Flying Wards. That winter the Ward-Bells toured South America with the Atayde Bros. Circus.<sup>71</sup>

From 1939-1940 Mayme was doing the wardrobe for the Sally Rand Nude Ranch Show with the World's Fair in San Francisco. Sally Rand had made a sensation at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933 as the original fan dancer. Mayme said of her: "Lovely girl, Sally, doesn't smoke or drink," and she reflected, "Of course, I didn't have much to do for Sally, herself." Taber states that in spite of the "Nude Ranch" title the forty chorus girls were wearing enough spangles to keep Mayme busy.

From 1940-41 the Ward-Bells were presenting a six person teeterboard act and a four person flying return act with the Hamid-Morton Show. In 1941 they appeared with Polack Bros. Circus in Cincinnati. Harold and Gus spent from 1942-45 serving in the Armed Forces and in 1945 the Ward-Bells were together again on the Russell Bros. Show.<sup>72</sup>

Mayme was listed with the performers on Cole Bros. Circus in 1941 and 1942 working with Harold Voise's flying act. Taber tells us that Mayme spent the war years driving a yellow cab in San Francisco.

In 1944 Art Concello bought out Russell Bros. Circus and Eddie Ward showed his versatility by taking charge of transportation with the show. In 1945 Eddie rebuilt the entire Russell Bros. Show for rail transport. Eddie joined the Ward-Bells for a time while they worked with Polack Bros. Shrine Circus between 1948 and 1954. He quit aerial performance in 1954 to open a machine shop in Sarasota, Florida, and in 1960 he became diesel electrician and train supervisor for Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey.<sup>73</sup>

In 1946 the Ward-Bells were working parks and fairs for Al Martin and in 1947 they were with Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey. At the close of the season Harold and Gus returned to Gus' hometown, Gainesville, Texas, where they broke in a flying act and teeterboard act for the Gainesville Community Circus. In 1948 they began working for Polack Bros. Circus with four people. In 1949 the troupe was increased to seven and was listed in the Polack Bros. program as "The Seven Ward-Bell Flyers" in Display 18, with Harold and Eddie working together. From 1950 on the troupe included nine people. In 1950 the troupe consisted of Eddie and his wife, Dottie; Bob Porter; Walter Long; Russell Nafus; Gus and Betty Bell; and Harold Ward and his wife, Millie, again with Polack Bros. in Display 21 of the program. In 1953 Eddie and his wife dropped out to be replaced by Eddie and Harold's sister, Genevieve Ward Tharp, and Bob Holman.

In 1955 Gus and Harold formed the Ward-

Bell Circus. They had originally planned to use the equipment from the Gainesville Community Circus but the building and equipment were destroyed by fire a week before the Ward-Bells arrived, at the close of Polack Bros. Circus season. They built an entire new show with 4,000 seats. The performance included Herbert Castle, tight wire; Dolly Jacobs, animal act; Norbu, gorilla impersonation; The Norden Troupe, wire artists; Andre Fox, Liberty Horses; Bob Nelson's trained pigs; Gus and Betty Bell, acrobatic act; and the Ward-Bell Flyers. The Ward-Bell Troupe was composed of Gus Bell and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Ward, Genevieve Ward Tharp, Walter Long, Billy Woods, and Bob Porter.

During three weeks in Honolulu they gave 27 performances to nearly 100,000 persons. They then played ten days at Wahiawa before returning to the coast. There they opened at Tacoma and toured Washington and Oregon before closing in late fall. At that time they expected to play indoor dates. The Ward-Bell partnership broke up at the end of the tour. At that time they were wintering in Galveston, Texas.

Mayme retired from performing in 1947 when Harold was discharged from the Army. Mayme later stated that Harold had told her, "Mom, who wants to see an old thing like you up there in tights? Get down." Mayme was fifty-two years old. Perhaps it was time she retired from the trapeze. The plucky little lady never performed again.

Mayme worked in the wardrobe departments of several major circuses over the years. In 1949 she was with Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey, from 1950-52 with Mills Bros., in 1954 with Polack Bros., in 1955 with the Ward-Bell Circus in Honolulu, again with Mills Bros. in 1956, with the Gil Gray Circus

Mayme Ward concluded her long career as the wardrobe mistress on many shows and at the Circus World Museum. She is shown here on Mills Bros. in the 1950's. Pfening Archives.





in Texas from 1958 to 1961, and also with the Rudy Bros. Circus in California in 1961, and with Barry Ashton Costumes of Hollywood in 1962.

From 1963 until 1973 she was in charge of the wardrobe department of Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. While with the Circus World Museum she made more than 1,200 costumes, 160 sets of horse trappings, and 17 elephant blankets used in the annual Old Milwaukee Days Circus Street Parade. She had a favorite elephant named Ruthie, for whom she created an especially elaborate costume. Mayme had worked with Ruthie since the 1920's. "Little old Ruthie . . . has short, fat legs just like me," she said. Mayme had come a long way from the little orphan girl who began her career making costumes for the Hines-Kimball troupe in Wisconsin in 1904.<sup>74</sup>

J. Daniel Draper knew Mayme well during her tenure at the Circus World Museum. He describes her as a down to earth person, never above such mundane or physical kinds of duty as driving a yellow cab or driving a semi trailer from stand to stand, and still not beneath her calling as circus star. She could "cuss like a trooper" if the occasion called for it, or she could be extremely sensitive, considerate, and compassionate. She once told him a story of how in the 1920's a couple of mashers had confronted her and one of her friends on a streetcar in a large city during the circus tour. The confrontation turned into a brawl and she was afterwards afraid that Eddie would see the bruises on her knuckles which resulted from fighting off the amorous strangers. Eddie had told her to always be careful not to injure her hands. The mashers, no doubt, got the surprise of their lives. Mayme is also described as a very perceptive judge of character, able to size a person up at a glance as either an "alright guy" or a "Phoney."<sup>75</sup>

Mickey King appeared with the various Ward acts in the 1920's. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.



The Ward-Bell Troupe in action on an indoor date. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

In 1958 Harold formed a new flying act which he presented with Rudy Bros. Circus in 1958 and 1959, with the Wallace Bros. Circus in 1960, and again in 1961 with Rudy Bros.<sup>76</sup>

In 1970 Mayme was named to the Circus Hall of Fame. She died in 1973 at the age of seventy-nine and was buried in an unmarked grave in Bloomington's Park Hill Cemetery.<sup>77</sup>

So what kind of man was this Eddie Ward, who made himself the Caesar of aerial performance in America? From the 1928 interview with Earl Chapin May he comes off as a competent professional with complete control of his life and a firm grasp on reality. He was an extremely capable man who showed fidelity and loyalty to his family and his fellow professionals. Yet May's article is inconsistent with other things which are apparent about Eddie. In May's article Eddie is fluent and eloquent while his letters are, in places, almost unintelligible. May probably paraphrased Eddie's comments for the purpose of clarity. Other quotations from Eddie taken along with his personal letters indicate that his grammar, his spelling, his vocabulary, not to mention his penmanship, were substandard. It might be uncharitable to suggest that Eddie might have had a learning disability, but one can't help but wonder. Yet Eddie was able to express himself in very eloquent terms otherwise. His talent as showman, athlete, trainer, and manager, coupled with his business instincts, made a profound impression on the circus world and inspired respect from everyone who knew him.

I think that Eddie was a man who knew his limitations but was able to exploit his abilities to the limit through sheer determination, resourcefulness, and personal initiative. The fact that he grew up in Bloomington was an important factor, for here was a city which had already seen success in the circus profession; an environment which encouraged him to develop his unique abilities.

Eddie's death in 1929 brought to a close the

most prolific period of development of aerial performance in America. But if Eddie can be called the Caesar of aerial performance in the 1920's, Art Concello would be called the Napoleon of the 1930's. Concello carried on Eddie's tradition of training and managing circus flyers after he bought the Ward barn in 1936. But from that time on the history of circus flyers in North America became less a story of troupes performing in distinct units and more a story of individuals performing at one time or another with various troupes under strong central management. Art Concello eventually became manager of nearly every circus flyer in the country and he could, as necessity dictated, work any one of them with any troupe anywhere in the country. The personnel of the troupes under his management could, and often did, change entirely from one year to the next. The Ward "family" was gone but the tradition of great circus

The Ward-Bell Troupe in 1947. Left to right: Harold Ward, Gus Bell, Betty Bell, and Millie Ward. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.





aerialists lived on for many years in Bloomington, Illinois.

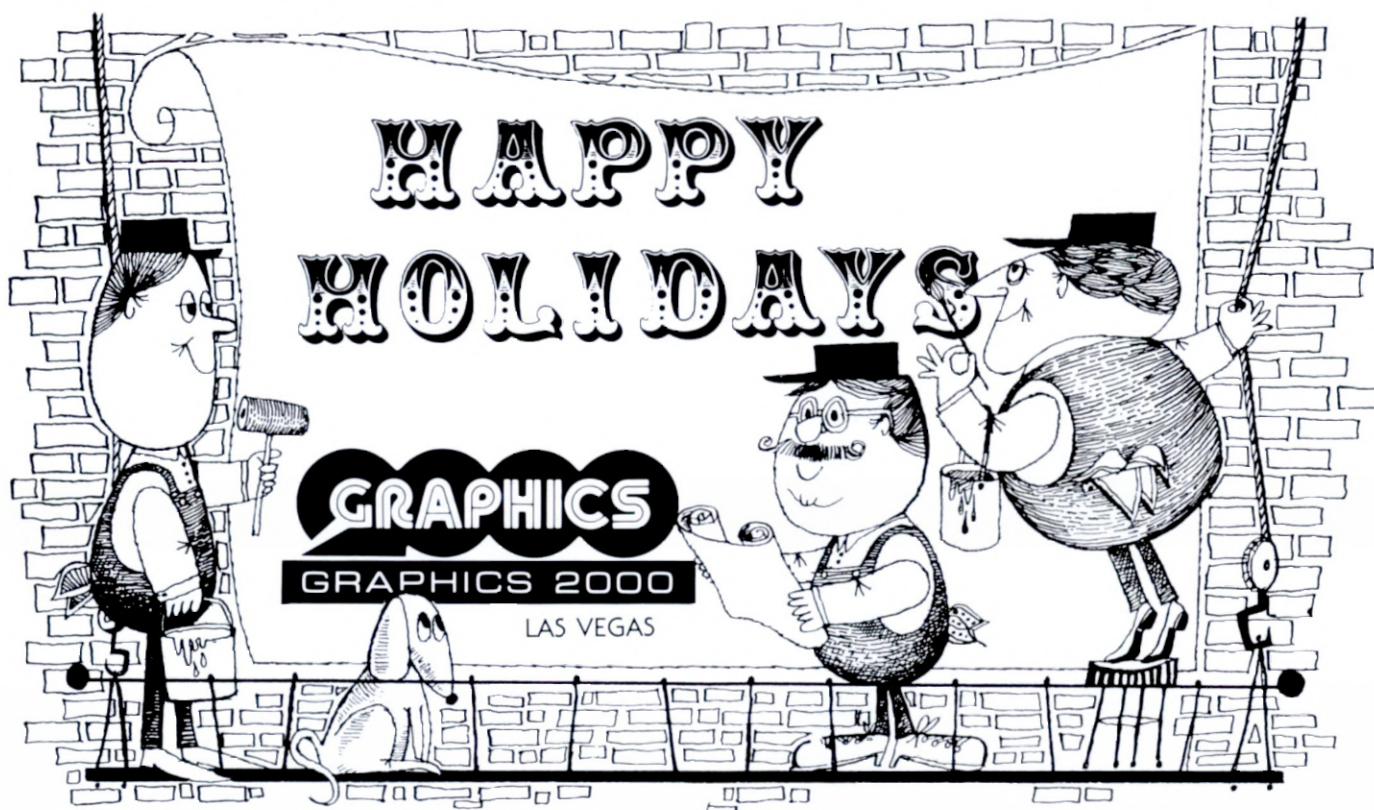
I would like to thank the following persons for their help and co-operation: my wife Kathy, Lorraine Valentine, Cherie Cunningham, Jim Carter, Walter Graybeal, Art Concella, Harold Voise, Evelyn Simpson, Dennis Watson, Catharine Hroenk of the Linn County Heritage Society in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Don Pfeifer of the Menard County Historical Society in Petersburg, Illinois, the personnel of the McLean County Historical Society in Bloomington, Illinois, Bob Sokan, Director of Illinois State University Special Collections, Fred D. Pfening III, the personnel of the Bloomington, Illinois Public Library, Larry Crist, Harrold Wilson, and special thanks to Mickey King, without whose input and assistance this article would make for pretty dry reading.

#### Footnotes

1. Bloomington, Illinois *Daily Bulletin*, June 13, 1905, June 23, 1918; Bloomington, Illinois *Daily Pantagraph*, May 9, 1929, June 4, 1961, December 4, 1927; documents in McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, Illinois.
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56. Interview with Mickey King, April 14, 1986 and April 21, 1986; *Billboard*, April 11, 1936.
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62. Letter dated February 17, 1928 in Pfening Archives.
63. Undated letter in Pfening Archives.
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# The Zenith of the American Circus Poster

Starting in the late 1870s and continuing until the early part of this century, the great lithograph companies in Cincinnati, Chicago, Buffalo and other cities produced thousands of circus posters, the quality of which has never been equalled before or since. The Strobridge Lithograph Company of Cincinnati was the industry's leader, spurred on by its aggressive salesman Albert A. Stewart, and by a talented stable of artists including Matt Morgan, Harry Ogden, and E. Roe. Other houses, such as Central Show Printing in Chicago, and the Courier Company of Buffalo, also had their share of circus work.

More Strobridge lithographs survive from the period than from all the other show printers combined. Consequently, the other firms haven't received their due. While posters produced by the Courier Company in the late 1890s and early 1900s have something of a cult following among circus historians, their high technical quality and innovative designs are generally unrecognized. Likewise, work from Central Show Printing is rarely published and is largely forgotten.

Strobridge produced the half sheets for Barnum and London in 1881. The lively colors and heavy text were typical of Strobridge's art during the period. That season was General and Mrs. Tom Thumb's only year on the Barnum and London Circus, adding to the historical significance of that bill.

The Forepaugh one sheets all date from 1889. All were printed by Central except the one featuring Mexican acts which was done by Courier. Three of them are collages showing between three and a dozen scenes, a popular style of the time which graphically communicated a great deal of information to the viewer.

Strobridge also did the Shelby, Pullman and Hamilton, and New

Great Pacific half sheets in 1881. Shelby, Pullman and Hamilton was a hot little grifter headed by Giles Pullman which flourished in the late 1870s and 1880s before going the way of all flesh. The New Great Pacific was the Sells Bros. second unit which became S.H. Barrett & Co. the next year. These four bills may be stock posters which could be printed with any title, and were often used by smaller shows. While in later years stock posters were generally inferior to specially designed paper, all four of these bills are first rate, an indication of the overall high quality of the work of the period, particularly at Strobridge.

The Ringling half sheets, created by the Courier Company, reflect the superb work of which that firm was capable. The two lithographs with the female performer and clown date from 1896. They are artistically extraordinary; in fact, the one with the horse has been hailed by more than one historian as the single finest American circus poster ever printed. These avant-garde bills contain no text beyond the shortened title in which even the trademark "World Greatest" has been omitted, a technique almost unheard of during the period. The other two sheets are from 1903. The Jerusalem bill reveals the dramatic potential of circus lithography, while the giraffe poster makes excellent use of color by off-setting the giraffes on a blue background.

Most of the photos are from the only known surviving example of the original lithograph. Many are published here for the first time; it is the first color reproduction of most. They are from the vast holding of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, whose library staff, particularly Robert L. Parkinson, generously took time from their busy schedules to make these treasures available to the Circus Historical Society. Thanks are also due CHS member Bill Biggerstaff who arranged for the color separations. Fred D. Pfening III

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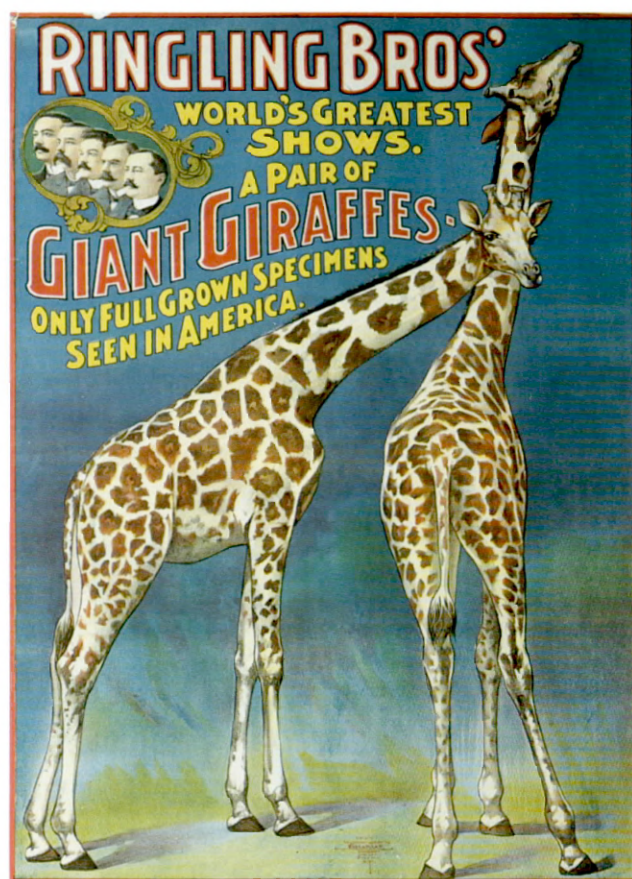
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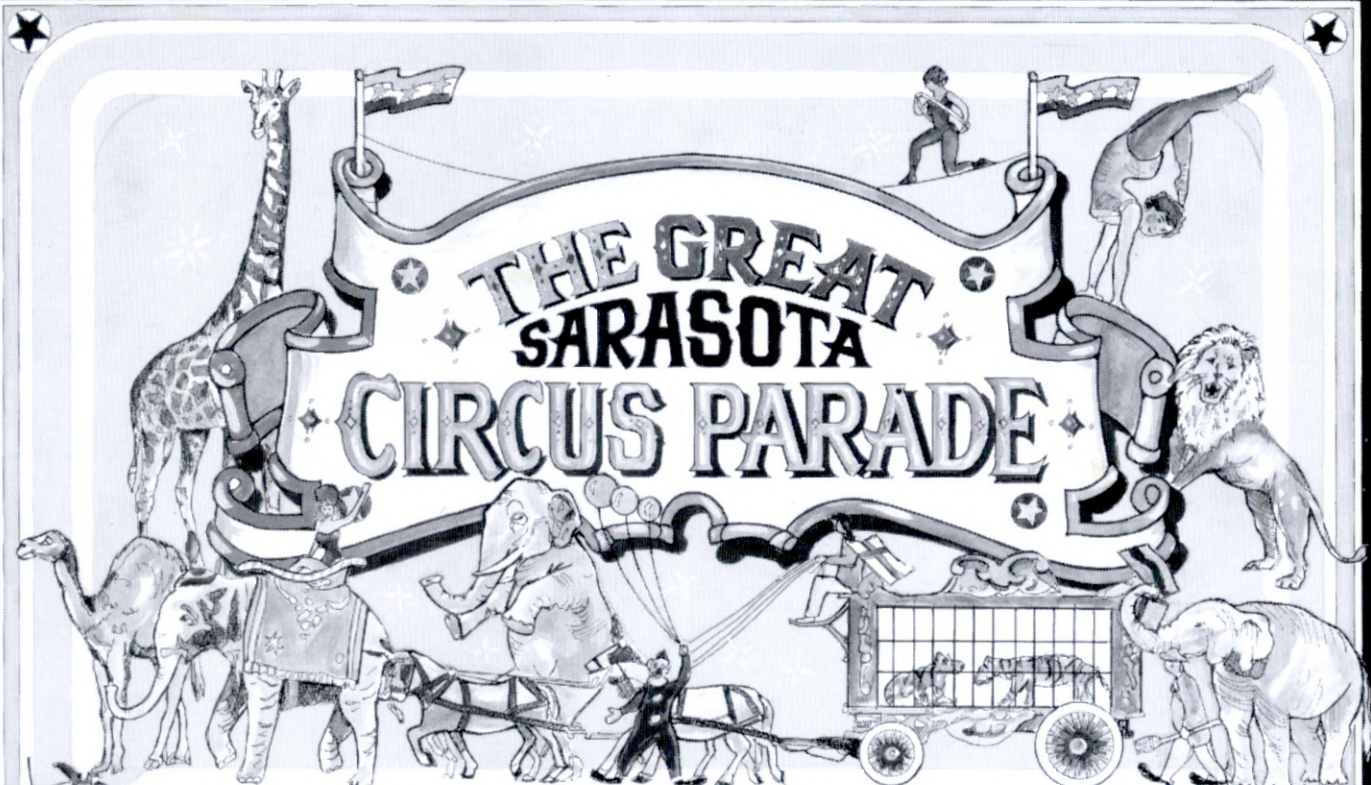
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# Silvan-Drew

## MOTORIZED

# CIRCUS



Permanent Address:

Box 625, Greensboro, N. C.

## Silvan-Drew Motorized Circus

by Joseph T. Bradbury

### PART ONE

An unforgettable childhood circus experience for the author was seeing, as a fifth grader, the newly arrived October 1931 National Geographic in our school library. This was the issue which contained Bev Kelley's superb circus article which was illustrated, in addition to numerous black and white photos, with several beautiful color plates. One of these color shots depicted a large outdoor billing stand of the Silvan-Drew Circus. It had no doubt been taken in the Washington, D.C. area, probably in 1929.

Even at my young age I recognized the names of many of the circuses mentioned in Kelley's article: Ringling-Barnum, Sells-Flota, John Robinson, Sparks, even the large motorized Downie Bros. show. However, this Silvan-Drew was a new one for me. I had never heard of it but the name somehow fascinated me and it has ever since. Others have informed me of a similar experience the first time they encountered the Silvan-Drew color photo in National Geographic. Many years have passed since that fall day in 1931. In time we learned that 1929 was the final season for Silvan-Drew, but the show's owner, Andrew Wachter, for a number of years was a member of CFA, CMB, and CHS. He served as a director of CHS for several years in the late 40's and early 50's. He was active in organized fan groups until his death in 1962. Hindsight tells us someone along the line should have secured Wachter's story and had it published, thus preserving it for posterity. However, sometimes such a simplistic solution is not always workable, as currently historians have attempted to record the story of several former show owners but have failed to get their cooperation. In any event the complete Silvan-Drew story has never been printed until now and this has been accomplished only with the help of several dedicated CHS members.

With bits and pieces we have attempted to put together Andrew Wachter's story. A. Mor-

ton Smith's article "Circus Man Model Builder" in the October 1949 issue of *Hobbies*, of which Wachter was the subject, mostly dealt with his later model building activities. The article stated that he grew up in Findlay, Ohio and developed early in life a childhood love for the "colorful, band-blaring circuses" as he described them.

CHS member Don Francis says he corresponded and also talked with Andy Wachter a number of times and found him to be most interesting. Wachter told him that he and some other men in his early days once toured about every branch railroad line in the country in a combination car and in two years painted Bull Durham and Lydia Pinkham compound signs on barns in the countryside. They would paint the sides or roof of a farmer's barn free of charge providing the paint job would include the sign for one of the products. Many of us, the author included, well remember especially those Bull Durham signs which were scattered all over the South, and I guess most of the country. They could still be seen for a few years following World War II.

Fletcher Smith, well known author of many articles in *Billboard* in the 1920's, wrote that Wachter owned a restaurant in Greensboro, North Carolina during the years he had Silvan-Drew on the road, but nothing else has been learned concerning this activity. His primary business seems to have been with outdoor advertising.

Wachter's first adventure in show business came in 1925 when he framed the Dixie O.K. Show, a vaudeville-type outfit which travelled on six trucks. It is assumed the show was under canvas and played a limited territory in North Carolina, probably venturing not too far from its home base in Greensboro.

The vaudeville show was so successful that Wachter decided to convert it into a circus. The exact date of this conversion was either

Silvan-Drew Motorized Circus used this letterhead featuring a lady rider seated on the back of a ring horse. The sheet is black and orange. The title and "motorized" is in black while "circus" is in orange shaded in black. Both colors are also used in the rider's costume and the horse's harness and plume. Joe Bradbury Collection.

1926 or 1927, or possibly the change-over was done in mid-season 1926. Mort Smith's article says it was 1926 and other listings have mentioned 1926. The *Billboard* review for the 1929 season opening noted it was Silvan-Drew's fourth season, which if correct, would mean 1926 was the first year. If indeed 1926 was the first season for Wachter's circus then nothing was mentioned about it in *Billboard*. A thorough search of the file for the entire year by the author failed to turn up a single note concerning the show. A fine *Billboard* article printed in 1928 said the circus was in its second season which would put 1927 as the first. Other *Billboard* accounts also point to 1927 as the beginning as does a questionnaire filled out by the show itself and sent to Karl Knecht, then editor of *The White Tops*.

Wachter in a letter written to Bill Kasiska July 28, 1949 (now in the Pfening Archives) indicated that 1926 was the initial season for Silvan-Drew. He says he purchased some circus equipment of the Lowery Bros. Circus, an overland outfit which last toured in 1925, for use on his new circus. The main purpose of Wachter's letter to Kasiska was that he was looking for advertising material, including lithos, of Silvan-Drew, noting that he had very few mementos of his show. Wachter also said that all of the show's records had been destroyed, an unfortunate occurrence for future historians. Finally, Wachter told Kasiska he was in the outdoor advertising business which evidently was his lifelong occupation.

The author is of the opinion, after sifting



through all of this conflicting information, that the vaudeville show operated through most, or all, of the 1926 season, and that 1927 can be considered the first full season for the bona fide circus operated by Wachter.

The new circus was framed in the Greensboro, North Carolina area. So far nothing has turned up pinpointing the exact location in the city. The title chosen for the circus was Silvan-Drew. Wachter told Don Francis these were names associated with his family. The show's letterhead used the title Silvan-Drew Motorized Circus, while most advertising

Newspaper advertisement used for Silvan-Drew's stand at Bernardsville, New Jersey, July 27, 1928. Gordon Carver Collection.

## BERNARDSVILLE FRIDAY, JULY 27

Afternoon and Night

Parade at Noon



the SHOWS WITH THE 'OK' MARK OF APPROVAL



This letterhead was used by the Dixie O.K. Shows in 1925. It was a vaudeville type outfit owned by Andrew Wachter and was the forerunner of the Silvan-Drew Circus. Pfening Archives.

matter referred to it as Silvan-Drew Two Ring Circus. Indeed it used two rings throughout its history.

One aspect of the Silvan-Drew show was that from the beginning it was fully motorized. Throughout this story we will be mentioning material which appeared in Fletcher Smith's excellent article in the December 10, 1927 *Billboard* titled "The Evolution of the Mud Show," which outlined the transition period during which overland shows which had once moved entirely by equine power changed to travelling with a combination of horse drawn vehicles and motor trucks. A few were now completely motorized, of which Silvan-Drew was one. Andrew Downie had launched his motorized Downie Bros. Circus in 1926 and tradition has long held that this was the first successful large scale circus, totally motorized. However, you must use each of these words to get the true picture. Certainly Coop & Lent in 1918 and the U.S. Motorized Circus in 1919 were pretty large shows, but they were not successful and lasted only a short time, three days in the case of the latter. Also a few shows were fully motorized prior to 1926, such as the Lindemans, whose show later became well known as Seils-Sterling, but these were very small at their beginning. When Silvan-Drew was launched in 1927, the largest overland shows (other than Downie Bros.), Mighty Haag and M.L. Clark, moved with a combination of wagons and trucks. Their elephants and other lead stock travelled on foot.

How many people who had been with the Dixie O.K. Show went out with Silvan-Drew is not known to the author. No doubt some of them did; however, a considerable number of both the staff and performers on the show's first season came from the Heritage Bros. 15 car circus which had been framed and gone out from nearby Burlington, North Carolina in the spring of 1926. That show was owned by Arthur (Heritage) Hoffman, and a heavy investor had been W.H. Workman, president of the Outdoor Advertising Co. Heritage Bros. had a sudden and unpleasant ending before the season was over when Jerry Mugivan of the American Circus Corporation repossessed the equipment at Stafford, Kansas on August 28. (The history of the Heritage Bros. Circus was printed in the March-April 1969 *Bandwagon*). W.H. Hopkins, who had been

with Heritage, was hired by Wachter as manager for Silvan-Drew in 1927.

The show was equipped mainly with one and a half ton trucks. The number of trucks used in 1927 as mentioned in various *Billboard* accounts ranged from 12 to 25. In all probability the smaller number is nearer correct. Some truck counters included show owned vehicles, those privately owned, trailers, anything on wheels parked on the lot. The reader is cautioned that playing the numbers game when it comes to vehicles on the early day motorized shows can be most confusing, especially when the only source is from the trade publication or eyewitness accounts, and that's all that is available to the author. Remember Wachter sadly related that all of the Silvan-Drew records had been destroyed some years ago so we have nothing official such as truck rosters to back up the "counts." Also the reader is cautioned not to make comparisons between a 12 truck show in 1927 and a current circus moving on the same number. A few years ago the late Charlie Campbell and I were visiting on the Jules & Beck Circus lot and were discussing this subject of the relative number and sizes of motorized vehicles of current shows and those of the past. We looked at a very large semi on the lot and I asked Charlie if he would guess how many trucks would have been used to carry the same load back when he was on Barnett Bros. in the early 1930's. We both felt in all probability it would have been at least 3, maybe 4.

Some have said the Silvan-Drew trucks were Model T Fords. All were straight bed vehicles as the appearance of tractors with semi trailers was still a few years away.

Fletcher Smith said in his article that a few of the larger overland shows, those moving with both equines and trucks, still followed the age old method of providing their performers and staff with overnight board and breakfast money to be used at local hotels, but that practice was fast disappearing. With the coming of motor vehicles to shows the personnel now lived in house trailers or trucks themselves fixed up for that purpose. Cabs served as quarters for the drivers, many of them being custom designed to provide a crudely designed bunk. It appears that all Silvan-Drew personnel were quartered on the vehicles and fed by a cookhouse on the lot.

Thanks to a "for sale" advertisement at the end of the 1927 season we know the size of the Silvan-Drew canvas. The big top was a 60 ft. round with two 30s, the sideshow a 40 x 60, and there were listed "other" small tents, sizes not given.

Nothing appeared in *Billboard* during the



early months of 1927 concerning the show until the March 12 issue which said that Harry Karsey would be in charge of the sideshow, that his wife Myrna would do mind reading and Jeanette, their daughter, would handle snakes. The Karseys were on Heritage Bros. in 1926.

The March 19, 1927 *Billboard* gave a full rundown on Silvan-Drew activities in its Greensboro, North Carolina quarters. The article said that Slim Thompson had turned out five new trucks, that the show was under the management of W.H. Hopkins, and that Dan M. Spayd, last season with Heritage Bros., was busy getting his cookhouse in order. Further information noted that H.E. Oaks had charge of the paint shop and each truck was to be lettered in gold leaf. All canvas was to be new. Prof. Bowman, band leader, was due to arrive early in April and would have a ten piece band. Miss Billie Hopkins, prima donna, was to be a feature of the spec. Others with the show were to be Jeanette Karsey with her high school and dancing horse "Maxwell," Mabel Steel, iron-jaw and ladder; Miss Karsey, ladder; W.C. Sykes, slack wire and traps; Mansfield Family, ground and aerial turns; Bill Hopkins, pony drill and bear act; Dinkey Moore, goat act; Miss Hopkins, dogs (she was also to present a juggling act); Henry Cooper with a January mule act; Paul Drew and his bucking mule; Bill Hopkins, riding dogs and monkeys; and Lee Herbert, mule hurdle. Set for clown alley were Rube Stone, Tom Swift, Lee Herbert, Dinkey Moore, and Tom Anderson.

The report continued, saying that Harry Steel would have charge of the big top canvas; Lonnie Rayals, sideshow canvas; Henry Richerson would be auto mechanic and electrician; Blackie Harris, boss of props; and Tim Sumlin, ring stock. The article concluded advising the sideshow lineup would include Harry Karsey, manager; Carl Yates and colored minstrels; Myrna Karsey, mindreading act; Johnson and Johnson, knife throwers; and Hazel Hill and her sword ladder.

A perusal of the acts indicates that individual performers would be doing two or more acts, which was customary of shows of that size in those days, a practice which continues to the present day. The review of the initial performance, which was printed some weeks later, shows that a number of changes of personnel had been made.

We are fortunate in having made available to us by CHS member Don Marks his late father's notes, which cover each of the show's three seasons. These notes include the route, although not totally complete, list of personnel, acts, sideshow attractions, and various other aspects on the physical equipment, animals, etc.

According to the Marks route the show gave a performance on April 16 in Greensboro; this possibly was only a dress rehearsal, but no doubt was attended also by local residents. The official season opener was at Liberty, North Carolina on April 18. This was followed by Siler City the next day. Other dates in the state known to have been played in April were Sanford, Troy, Mt. Gilead, and two days in Albemarle, on 29-30.

The April 30, 1927 *Billboard* covered the season's opener saying that Silvan-Drew's initial stand was at Liberty, North Carolina, April 18, where fair business was encountered. It then proceeded to its next date at Siler City, where, showing under auspices of the city fireman, it had two capacity houses. The train of 18 trucks and 2 band trucks made a splendid showing. [Author's note: The *Billboard* writer used the now virtually obsolete term of "train" to describe the movement of the trucks. This term, originally used for wagons, has been displaced by the present word, "convoy," to indicate a close column of motor vehicles. Early truck shows did move their vehicles together in a convoy, a practice later prohibited by state patrols in the early 30's]. The roster included William (Bill) Hopkins, general manager and equestrian director; Mrs. Billie Hopkins, prima donna and working her dog and juggling acts; Sadie and Bessie Black, iron jaw and double traps; Walter E. Skyes, on the wire, single traps and flying perch; Jeanette Karsey, high school horse and swinging ladder; Joe Clark, Australian whip cracker; Dinkie Moore, working pony drill and performing goats; Catherine Bowen, swinging ladder and contortion act; Bill Hopkins and Tommie Swift, January act; Irene Ehrich and her posing horse "Duke"; Bill Eldridge and "Pewee," his talking and pickout pony; Three Bullards, in acrobatics and hand balancing act; Barney Monk, slide for life; Mlle Martha and performing bears and riding goat. The Bowen Family furnished a 12 piece band for the program and Rube Brown, Tommie Swift, Dinkie Moore, Robert Bowen and Chic Bloom were in clown alley. William (Bill) Wilder was manager of candy stands with 3 assistants, Charles (Slim) Lowe, Hubert (Fat) Causey, and Lee Wagner.



Two examples of Silvan-Drew posters on display at Paul Horsman's former Circus Farm at West Fryeburg, Maine. Paul Horsman Collection.

Harry G. Karsey was sideshow manager; Mrs. Karsey, mind reader and snakes; Albert Fancum, fire eater; Fan Joy, Chinese sword box mystery; Punch and Judy and magic by Harry Karsey; Eddie Smith and Bill Taylor, dancers; Roy T. Johnson and John Priest,

ticket sellers; Tommy Green, big show ticket office and assistant to Mrs. Billie Hopkins, secretary and treasurer; Moses R. Allen, reserve seat tickets; Charles Bowen, superintendent of lights and mechanic; Ralph G. Walker, assistant; Dan Spayd, steward of cookhouse; Joe Stamps, cook, and three waiters; Merten Couch, front door ticket taker; W.H. (Alabama) Cooper, big top boss canvasman.

Some of the Marks notes record that Silvan-Drew had 2 high school horses, a 4 pony drill, goats, bears, and pigs. He records the various "counts" of the show's vehicles as 12-13-14-18-25. At least one truck was in advance. Color scheme for motor vehicles was orange and blue.

It will be noted the show had no elephant; in fact there is no mention of Silvan-Drew having an elephant throughout its history. This is not unusual for a fully motorized show of that size. As mentioned before the larger overland shows such as Mighty Haag and M.L. Clark had elephants, but they walked from stand to stand. Downie Bros. carried a single elephant named Teddy its first year out in 1926. He later grew into a good sized tusker, but was still small back then. It was most difficult, if not virtually impossible, to transport a large elephant in 1926-27 model trucks. John C. Cloutman's book *The Story of Mr. Circus, Charles T. Hunt Sr.*, states that Hunt, who had fielded an overland circus since the 1890's, didn't get his first elephant until the winter of 1926-27, it being a baby named Dolly, from Ringling-Barnum.

The May 7, 1927 *Billboard* said that Silvan-Drew had a close call from fire at Sanford, North Carolina. While showing April 23, under auspices of the American Legion, the employees and performers of the show were called upon to use their wits in order to save the tents. A vacant house was situated on the lot being used by the show, and it was necessary to put the sideshow within 8 feet of this building on account of the lot being so small. Just as Harry Karsey, the sideshow manager, started his show, fire broke out in the house, making it necessary to stop the performance and move the kid show out of the path of the flames. The house was destroyed. Karsey afterwards moved the sideshow canvas back to its original place. Both the sideshow and big show played to good business. A final item in the article had it that Billie Hopkins, prima donna, was recently presented with a rhinestone evening dress as a birthday present by the performers.

Mount Airy, May 6, was the final stand in North Carolina, then the show entered Virginia the next day at Stuart. It moved across the state and on May 18th went into West Virginia at White Sulphur Springs. From then on through June 24 the little motorized show wandered around in that state. This was prime overland show territory for spring and early summer. The little so called "mudders" ranged from the deep South up into the Carolinas, Virginia, and along the eastern seaboard where ordinarily movement was easier, but they also liked the mountain territory and would play for weeks in West Virginia and over into Maryland and Pennsylvania. There was opposition at times for



Silvan-Drew but it came from other overland units, primarily Hunt, sometimes Downie or Mighty Haag, or one of the other numerous mud shows. Rarely was there any conflict with a railroad show, especially a flat car circus. Some of the same size towns were played by small gilly type railers but by the late 20's this type show was fast dying out.

The *Billboard* coverage is so sparse for Silvan-Drew in 1927 as compared to its later seasons, quite a few matters must be assumed. For example in 1928 and 1929 it is known the show had several cages of wild animals housed in the sideshow. That probably was true also in 1927. Likewise the street parade in the last two seasons consisted of two band trucks, an air calliope truck; in fact, several times it was mentioned that the show paraded all of its vehicles through town in order to make a greater impression on the populace. Unfortunately no photos have turned up picturing the Silvan-Drew parade for any season, so word descriptions alone must suffice.



Leaving West Virginia the show moved through Pennsylvania and into New York state and hence to near the Canadian border. An interesting article appeared in the July 16, 1927 *Billboard* headed "Silvan-Drew To Play Six Weeks in Canada." The text stated that the show opened its 12th week at Cochranton, Pennsylvania. It continued, "The management reports an extra good season and is expecting to play about six weeks in Canada before returning to its winter home in Greensboro, N.C. about November 1. The show moves on 25 trucks and is doing some good business in towns of 5,000 population and less. The personnel is composed mostly of the old Heritage show and many friends of W.H. (Bill) Hopkins and Mrs. Billie Hopkins will be glad to know that they feature in the show as general manager and prima donna respectfully. Other members of the troupe are Tommie H. Green, asst. manager and legal adjuster; H.G. Karsey, sideshow manager; Mrs. Myrna Karsey and daughters Jeanette and Martha. (Jeanette does pony riding, traps and wire, while Martha who's only six years of age does double traps and appears in the spec.) W.C. Sykes, equestrian director, performs traps, and slack wire. Tommie Swift, Lonnie Royals, Sid Pendleton and five brothers, are clowns. Billie Hopkins, high school ponies;

Bill Dupler, trained goats; Lela Lemay with her dogs; Billie Hopkins does a marvelous juggling act. The sideshow is doing fine. Mr. Karsey has 17 attractions, of which Myrna Karsey in her mind reading act is the feature. Merton Couch is in charge of the candy stand; Jack Mills, special announcer and opener [this should be the well known later owner of Mills Bros. Circus with the familiar candy pitch of those days]; Johnnie Pick, master mechanic, and Frank Buzzard, chief of cookhouse. The show has received very favorable comments in the newspapers. Among the visitors were Mr. and Mrs. A. Wachter, owners of the show, who are spending a few days of their summer vacation before going to the Adirondacks." The mention of Wachter visiting the show indicates he did not travel with it on a regular basis. Each season he had a general manager in charge. No doubt, other than brief visits on the show, he attended to his other regular business interests.

The July 30, 1927 *Billboard* in a very short

**Large billing daub for Silvan-Drew stand at Norwood, North Carolina, October 18, 1928. Note Hunt Bros. paper at top for an October 31 date. Pfening Archives.**

notice said that Silvan-Drew turned them away at its recent stand in Aurora, New York so great was business in that town. Also it was noted that the show had decided not to go into Canada.

According to Fletcher Smith's writing, Silvan-Drew did go right to the border with every intention of going into Canada, but was turned away by Dominion officials. The show wanted to move into Ontario. For those not acquainted with the facts it seems strange no motorized circus ever travelled into Canada in the 20's and 30's, not even Charlie Sparks after he took over the large Downie Bros. show in 1930. When Sparks owned the railroad show bearing his name it played in Canada for many a season. Fred H. Phillips of Fredrick, New Brunswick, long time circus fan and historian and personal observer of the Canadian circus scene for many years, says that the regulations applying to motor vehicles were so complex, varying from province to province, even down to district level in those days, it was impossible for any American showman to even seriously attempt a Canadian tour.

Furthermore, the network of adequate, hard surface highways was later in developing than in the U.S. All of this kept the American motorized shows out of Canada for almost 25 years. In fact it wasn't until Bailey Bros. made a tour of the western provinces in 1948 that the frontier gates finally let down. In 1949 Robbins Bros. (the Bailey show retitled) played extensively in eastern Canada and King Bros. toured the western provinces; then the flood gates were let down for good and U.S. based motorized outfits went into the dominion almost every season from then on.

With the Canadian trip out Silvan-Drew moved on across western New York state, Pennsylvania, and into Ohio for a few weeks. The August 13, 1927 *Billboard* told of one very interesting date in the Buckeye State. The article said that Silvan-Drew was signed to appear during the week of August 15-20 for the Odd Fellows exposition in Youngstown. The West Avenue showgrounds were used for the event. For this special engagement the show secured a larger big top that would seat 1,800 and special acts and novelties would be used during the stand. No further details were given on this. It was mentioned that W.J. Rice, press agent of the show, was to remain in Youngstown not only to promote the show but also to cooperate with the Odd Fellows for their big project, "The Pageant of Progress" in which industrial, agricultural and Youngstown products would be exhibited. Both Youngstown newspapers devoted much space to the affair and five lodges of Odd Fellows sponsored the exposition. The offer came to Silvan-Drew unsolicited and through the recommendation of Joe Moss, of the editorial staff of *The Vindicator*. Tommy Green was manager of Silvan-Drew to handle the Youngstown appearance.

The show was back in Pennsylvania by August 24 at Clarion, then remained in that state for the last stand that was published in *Billboard* and also on the Marcks notes, that being September 9, at Ohiopyle. It was at Myerstown, September 7, and Confluence the 8th. It seems unusual the show would close so far from home but perhaps that was the case. In any event the show returned to the Greensboro, North Carolina area to winter at Kernersville.

Nothing appeared in the trade publications for several months concerning Silvan-Drew but the December 27, 1927 *Billboard* had a major announcement. The article was headed, "Al F. Wheeler to Manage Silvan-Drew Circus." The report said that the show would be enlarged and improved for its next season tour and would go out under management of Al F. Wheeler. The article continued, "All new and larger canvas equipment will be used and quite an extensive menagerie will be added as well as many new parade features. The business staff and department heads will be made up largely of former employees of Mr. Wheeler, who are familiar with the overland show game. Three trucks will be used in advance with a very attractive line of paper, most of which will be special. The arenic program will employ 2 rings and a circular stage, and will contain several novel features. Offices will be at Oxford, Pa. from where all business



will be transacted until March 1, after which it will be moved to Kernersville."

Also in the same *Billboard* appeared this advertisement: "Silvan-Drew Motorized Circus. Opening in North Carolina early in April. Want. Asst. mgr. who can do legal adjusting, press work etc. and who can handle advance in emergency. Must be an all round experienced showman. For The Advance. Close contracting, heavy billing General Agent. Second Agent who can contract, fast-stepping billposters who can drive trucks. (DRINKERS KEEP AWAY). For Big Show. Feature act, Fast comedy acts. Clowns and versatile performers. All must do 2 or more. Prima Donna, attractive young ladies who can sing for sideshow, spectacle, and assist on concessions. Domestic animal trainer, or will place man with several good acts. Concert Feature. Band leader, with good rep of music and can use it. Musicians on all instruments, preference given to those who can drive cars. Air calliope player to double band. Boss Canvasman. Master Mechanic who can get show over road. Experienced sober electrician (Universal Plant). Boss property man, experienced camp cook, waiters and workmen who drive trucks. For Side Show, good inside man who can make strong second openings. Novelty Acts. Scotch Band, snappy small colored band and minstrels. For Concessions. Lady to run ball game, candy butchers, candy package man. Banner Solicitor. Preference to those with house cars or sleeping accommodations. For Rent. Hamburger and Lunch Stand. Address Al F. Wheeler. Oxford, Pa."

Al F. Wheeler was a well known personality in the circus world when he took over the management of Silvan-Drew for the 1928 season. He enjoyed the reputation of being an expert in overland circus operation and was well experienced in that field although during his career he had operated both small and large railroad shows. Fletcher Smith had an excellent article on Wheeler in the December 7, 1929 *Billboard* and called to mind the days of the early 1900's when Al F. and his brother were in the ice business in Utica, New York. He felt he could make a go out of show business so he sold the ice business and organized Al F. Wheeler's New Model Shows, a small overland circus. The show travelled through New York State and Pennsylvania and made plenty of money. Author Smith says he doubts if there was ever any show framed with less people that gave a performance which got by. Wheeler's two sons, Allison and Leland, were clowns in the New Model show. Later Wheeler was in partnership with Andrew Downie in operation of a medium sized railroad circus titled Downie and Wheeler which was on the road 1911-13. In 1914 the partners split with Al F. operating Wheeler Bros. and Downie running LaFena Wild Animal Show. Both were small railroaders. In 1916 Wheeler put on the road a large rail show using the Wheeler Bros. title which was financed by Van Leer Black, a wealthy Baltimore resident. Unfortunately the big show was not a success. After the 1916 fiasco, according to Smith, Wheeler for several years assumed the name of Frank Belmont and went with a number of shows. He became



Silvan-Drew Circus advertising car No. 1, Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, in 1926. Pfening Archives.

an assistant to Rose Killian and acquired the sideshow privilege. Wheeler put new life into the small southern Rose Killian wagon show and took it as far north as Ohio. One year he was with R-B in charge of the vaudeville acts but gave up a nice salary there to go with the M.L. Clark Show, another medium size wagon outfit. He rejuvenated the show, got it into paying territory, and later went with Hunt Circus, which Smith described as a little wagon show out of Maryland. Wheeler made a real show out of it, bought trucks, took it into bigger towns, played Staten and Long Island and when he left it was as neat a truck show as any on the road. Wheeler was with Hunt in 1927 where he operated the sideshow, including furnishing the attractions for same. The season was very profitable for both Charles Hunt and Wheeler. Hunt acknowledged Wheeler's contribution to his show in his book, *The Story of Mr. Circus*. Hunt recorded that financially both he and Wheeler had a wonderful year in 1927. Fletcher Smith's article noted that Wheeler was known as a "doctor of sick shows" and since Silvan-Drew had not done well in 1927 Wachter sought out his services for the next season and was successful in obtaining them. Perhaps it was the other way round, and Wheeler contacted Wachter offering to come on board and make the show a success. What financial arrangement was made between Wachter and Wheeler is not known to the author. In all probability Wheeler got the sideshow privilege as part of the deal and even maybe a percentage of receipts. In any event it appears that once Wheeler took over he was in complete charge of running the Silvan-Drew show.

### The 1928 Season

Beginning in early 1928 activities of Silvan-Drew received excellent coverage in *Billboard* and continued on through the final days of the show in the fall of 1929. The reason for this was probably that a well known circus personality, Al F. Wheeler, was now aboard whereas Andrew Wachter was relatively unknown in the circus world.

The January 7, 1928 *Billboard* said that the Silvan-Drew Circus was quartered in a large tobacco warehouse at Kernersville, North

Carolina located on the Southern Railway between Greensboro and Winston-Salem. The work of building new equipment and repairing and repainting of the old was already underway, and the show would go out nearly doubled in size from last season. Al F. Wheeler arrived from New York on December 20 with a shipment of wild animals for the menagerie. These were already in their winter cages in the animal house adjacent to the quarters. Part of the main building was to be used for a ring barn where several new horse and animal acts were broken in. Mack Jurado was in charge of the quarters and arranged for a big Christmas dinner for the personnel. The article concluded by noting that Mr. Wheeler had returned to Oxford, Pennsylvania from which bookings and business transactions were made.

A week later *Billboard* advised that another large shipment of animals from the Oxford, Pennsylvania office had arrived at the show's quarters in Kernersville. These animals were a part of the Belmont Wonderland Show owned by Al F. Wheeler, and would be with Silvan-Drew in 1928. The article continued saying that the "woodworkers, painters, and decorators are already busy and the show will put out a parade which will be on a par with any of the motorized circuses. In the ring barn trainers are busy daily breaking in a number of additional horse, pony, and animal acts, which added to those carried with the show last season will make up a very pleasing array of trained animal displays." Other notes stated that William H. Hopkins was a visitor at quarters. He and Mrs. Hopkins were at their home in Greensboro, North Carolina. Also visiting were Harry G. Karsey, who was manager of the sideshow in 1927 and Tommie H. Green, who had his pit show on a carnival on tour in the South. Wheeler was busy at his office in Oxford, Pennsylvania booking people and attractions for next season.

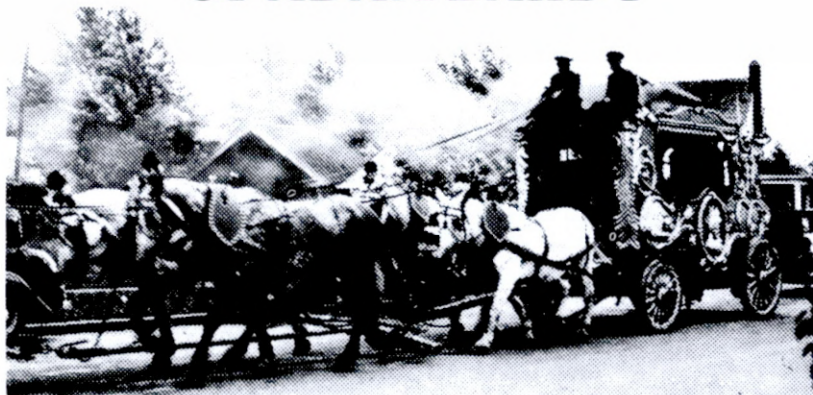
The January 21, 1928 *Billboard* said that J. A. Smith, last season with Hunt Bros., would be with Silvan-Drew as master mechanic and lot superintendent. His wife would have charge of the candy stands.

In the same issue the following advertisement appeared: "SILVAN-DREW (Motorized) CIRCUS. Want: Feature act and a few more comedy acts for Big Show. Single Lady performers. Clowns who double concert. All must do two or more. Attractive young ladies to sell tickets and work in Spec and Concert. Musicians. Strong cornet, slide, and tuba, and





## CIRCUS LIFE AND ADVENTURE OF ADAM BARDY



For those who like to spend a nice quiet evening in reading of the "good old days", here is a book full of the interesting, adventurous life of Adam Bardy, especially of the roaring twenties and thirties, which includes circus life and describes the wholesome entertainment of those wonderful tented circus years.

Is it any wonder, then, why so many boys would be lured into circus life? Some would run away from home and join a circus, and the most wonderful "thrills of a lifetime" would be theirs, as they would experience the knowledge and education of how the rest of the world lived, as the circus traveled, not only in America, but also in Canada...and, in the really old days, into other countries as well.

The greatest thrill a young boy would have, up to 50 or so years ago, was the arrival of the circus in the summer time. Many youths would be awaiting this great event all during the summer, as the circus was the most wonderful of all outdoor entertainment - "especially the circus with the street parade". What a thrill to see all of the animals in their cages and the bands playing, and the steam calliope that would always be at the tail end of the parade! This steam calliope was a thrill to listen to, as the music could be heard for a long distance from the circus grounds, telling of the circus, and the roar of the lions and other animals was a sound that echoed into the homes of all who lived nearby, punctuating the excitement of the circus.

In the picture shown here, we see the end of the street parade, showing what a steam calliope looked like in those wonderful days of the circus street parade.

Also included in this book, read of Adam's life as New England's largest rabbit breeder of meat and show rabbits, "a wonderful little business for anyone who lives in the country", including many good hints on rabbit raising.

This exciting revised and expanded new book, just out, tells of a truly adventurous life that begins in 1915, when Adam, as a boy of 8 years old, runs away with the great Buffalo Bill Wild West Circus, and how gypsy friends that Adam meets give him money to get back to his home town, and how a great friendship with gypsy fortune tellers comes into Adam's life, and how this role would be played out in his life.

The thrilling life story of Adam Bardy is in this book, telling of his life with the gypsy fortune tellers, including a good explanation of fortune telling, which was so often practiced at carnivals and amusement parks, where the real gypsies plied their trade, garbed in the "dress wear" of the gypsies of old, living their lives as they did in the "old country".

We can never go back to the life of the "good old days", but here in this book are pictures and the story of what it was really like to experience the joy and happiness, as young boys would run away from home and join the circus, or "go west" and find life on a western "cowboy ranch".

This wonderfully exciting and adventurous way of life is now gone, but the memories and excitement live on in this book of Adam Bardy's true life story. Now, this combined, revised and expanded new book is available for the reasonable price of \$12.95 a copy, sent first class.

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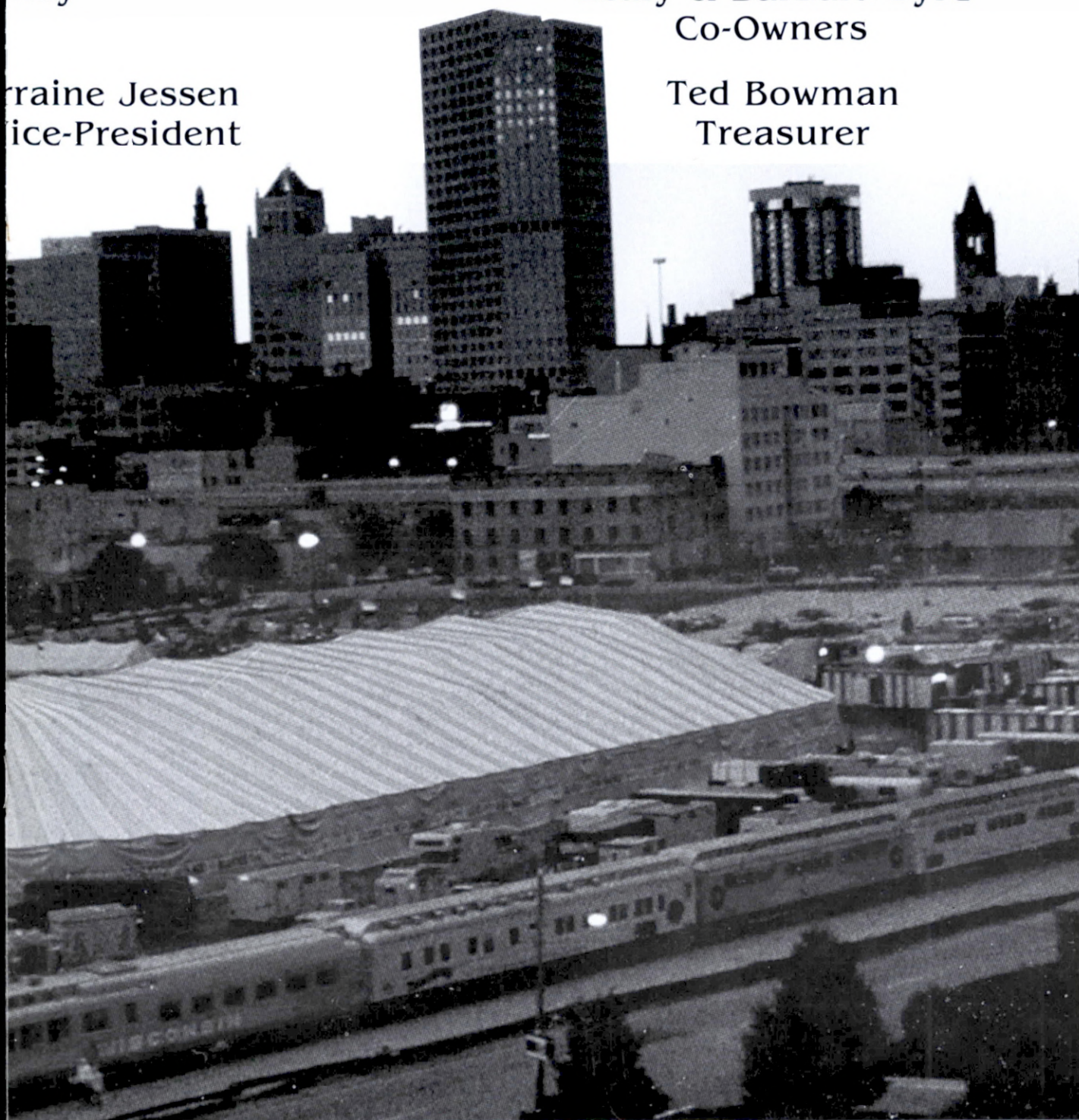


Photo by Ken Holehouse





Holiday Greetings  
and  
Best Wishes  
Joe and Marian McKennon





**Trucks on the Silvan-Drew lot, probably 1927. The show's vehicles were attractively decorated and all went in the daily street parade. Pfening Archives.**

others to complete Big Show Band. For Side Show. Good inside man with several act, who can make good openings. Young lady to handle snakes. Novelty Acts. Scotch Band and man to handle Untamable Lion Act. Billposters. Two more fast steppers for town car and country routes. One hustling student who can lithograph and to assist on town car. Electrician. To act as assistant mechanic. Will Buy. Pony drill and Domestic Animal Acts. FOR SALE. Account using larger tents - 60 with two 30 ft. middles, 40 x 60 and other small tents. All in good condition but too small for our use. Address, Al F. Wheeler, Oxford, Pa." It is assumed the tents for sale were those used by Silvan-Drew in 1927.

In the Pfening Archives is the employment contract between Silvan-Drew Motorized Circus and one Harry M. Thomas, which is dated January 25, 1928. Mr. Thomas was to commence work in April 1928 with the contract to run for the entire season. He was billposter and lithographer on the country route car. Remuneration was \$40.00 per week with notation that Thomas would pay his own hotel bills. The contract was signed by Harry M. Thomas and Al F. Wheeler.

In late January it was announced that Frank P. Meister, who had formerly been with Wheeler Bros., would direct the Silvan-Drew band. He had recently closed with M.L. Clark & Son in the south. (The Clark show closed January 12 at Cottonwood, Louisiana and was now in its quarters in Alexandria, Louisiana.) Evidently something happened with the plans for Meister to join Silvan-Drew because a month later *Billboard* said that Arthur W. Kellogg would be the Silvan-Drew bandleader.

Also near the end of January the trade publications said that E.G. Smith, who at one time was assistant manager of the Al F. Wheeler New Model Shows and later, for three seasons, general agent of Honest Bill Shows, had been engaged as general agent for Silvan-Drew. Three trucks and the agent's car were to be used in advance with a complete line of paper, most of which was to be special.

The February 4, 1918 *Billboard* carried the following advertisement: "SILVAN-DREW CIRCUS. Wants Side Show People. Good inside man with several acts who can make strong openings. Girl to handle reptiles. Novelty Acts. Musican act. Band, doubling for parade. All Day Grinder for Pit Show; must make good openings. Ladies for Conces-

sions who can sing and dance. Al F. Wheeler, Oxford, Pa."

Wheeler, who must have known everyone connected with the circus business, continued to hire experienced people. In mid February he signed E. B. Walker, who had been on the opposition brigade of the 101 Ranch Wild West Show for the past two seasons and before that on Wheeler Bros. and Walter L. Main shows, to be in charge of the Silvan-Drew advertising cars. At the time it was announced that the three advertising cars were in the hands of the painters at the Kernersville quarters.

The February 11, 1928 *Billboard* reported that all trained stock and much of the equipment of Miller's Dog and Pony Show in quarters at Eaton Rapids, Michigan had been sold to Silvan-Drew. It was to be shipped to winter quarters in Kernersville, North Carolina within the next few days.

Also in the same issue was a for sale ad in which Al F. Wheeler offered a large male lion with fine exhibition cage for \$200.00. It is not known if the animal had been with the 1927 Silvan-Drew show or if it was owned personally by Wheeler. Probably it was his property.

The circus world continued to be well informed about Silvan-Drew throughout the month of February. Word came that Billie Burke, female impersonator, would be with the show working the "come in" and presenting his dance specialties in the opening spec and concert. The LeVine Family, last season with Downie Bros., was also signed to appear with Silvan-Drew in 1928. Mrs. LeVine was the daughter of Charles T. Hunt, manager of Hunt Bros. Circus.

The February 18, 1928 *Billboard* said that William H. Hopkins had arrived at quarters and would leave early next week for Eaton Rapids, Michigan to attend shipment of stock and equipment recently purchased from the Miller's Dog and Pony Show. Wheeler, who had been working out of his Oxford office, was expected to arrive at the Kernersville quarters about March 1. In the ring barn several additional horse, pony and animal acts were being worked while the woodworking department under Slim Howes and the paint shops with Fred Faust in charge were turning out work.

W. H. Sanders, superintendent of canvas, would soon start work in his department to get all equipment in shape before opening. Master mechanic Al Smith was to arrive soon to superintend the placing of new tableau and cage bodies on their chassis, a shipment of which was expected to arrive next week.

In the same *Billboard* it was mentioned that M.L. Clark & Sons show, in quarters in Alexandria, Louisiana, would open its season in March. It would travel on 18 wagons painted white and green and 12 motor trucks painted royal blue and orange. The big top would be a 70 ft. round with three 30s.

The February 25, 1928 *Billboard* said Silvan-Drew would open in North Carolina in early April, that the show would be nearly doubled in size from last season, and that Mrs. William Hopkins, now in her home in Greensboro, would again be prima donna. The issue also had this advertisement: "SILVAN-DREW CIRCUS. Want. Producing clown. Fast comedy acts. Musicians. Baritone. Trombone, and Alto. Billposters, who can lithograph and drive car. Sideshow. Novelty acts. Small Colored Band and Minstrels. Scotch Band. Girl for Ball Game. Man for popcorn and cold drink stand. Hustling candy butchers and balloon man. Sober workmen who drive trucks. Al F. Wheeler, Oxford, Pa. until March 1, then address Kernersville, N.C."

Information in early March said that Wheeler was now in Silvan-Drew quarters putting finishing touches on the circus preparatory for an early opening. General agent E.G. Smith, from his home in Atwater, Ohio reported he had signed a very efficient force of billers for the advance. The advance cars were all ready to leave the paint shops after being decorated. William H. Hopkins at quarters for several weeks, reported, that many new animal acts were on hand. W.S. Binsfield, who had the lunch stand privilege, would have a new outfit requiring two trucks for its transportation.

The March 24, 1928 *Billboard* reported that John Thompson had completed two new tableaus, a new calliope body, and three cages, all currently in the paint shop and ready for their decorations. Master mechanic J.A. Smith was inspecting and overhauling all motors. The new big top has arrived and W.H. Sanders was busy fitting up equipment for it. He was also building several lengths of new seats.

The same issue also contained the annual roster of the various circuses going out for the season. The Silvan-Drew roster was as follows: "Silvan-Drew Co., prop. [Author's note. This was the company organized to operate the circus. Andrew Wachter's name did not appear in the roster at all]; Al F. Wheeler, manager; William H. Hopkins, asst. manager and equestrian director; Fred S. Fuerst, treasurer; E.G. Smith, general agent; Lee Wheeler (son of Al F.), local contractor; Jack Riddle, press agent back; Harry G. Karsey, manager sideshow; J.A. Smith, general supt.; Mrs. J.A. Smith, supt. privileges; Arthur M. Kellogg, musical director; Mrs. Wm. H. Hopkins, supt. reserve seat tickets; W.H. Sanders, supt. canvas; Dan Hart, boss hostler (trucks); Joe Brown, supt. commissary dept; Bill Taylor,



supt. lights; S.A. Huntley, supt. props; Tim Sunlin, supt. ring stock; Paul Swift, supt. animals; E.B. Walker, brigade agent; Harry Thomas, mgr., car No. 2; Harry Bellisle, mgr. car No. 3; Frank Belmont, legal adjuster; Jack Riddle, announcer." The name of Frank Belmont as legal adjuster is interesting. According to Fletcher Smith's article quoted earlier that was the moniker Al F. Wheeler once used. What it means in connection with the show roster is not known.

In late March Harry Karsey announced the lineup of attractions for the sideshow of which he was manager. These included Madame Karsey, mentalist; Flossie LaBlanche, physical culture exhibition; Millie Jeanette, the girl with 1000 lives; Joe Foley, escape artist; Bessie Bell, reptiles; Karsey's punch and magic; and 7 cages of animals. Fred C. Bell and Jack Cavanaugh were ticket sellers.

E.B. Walker, the show's brigade manager, was to have one lithographer and two billposters to protect territory from other shows and fight opposition. Lee Wheeler would act as opposition agent. It seems that the manager's son, Lee Wheeler, had a variety of duties, both in advance and back on the lot.

In late March the trade publications said that Walter Jones would play the Silvan-Drew air calliope during the season. There is no evidence the show ever had a steam calliope during its existence. Steamers were quite rare with overland shows not only in the 1920's but in the 30's as well.

Silvan-Drew made the final preparations during the first two weeks of April, then opened its 1928 season, on April 14, in its quarters town of Kernersville, North Carolina. The April 28, 1928 *Billboard* covered the opening in an article with headlines, "SILVAN-DREW HAS GOOD START AT KERNERSVILLE." The story read as follows: "With beautiful weather, a good matinee audience and a capacity crowd at night, the Silvan-Drew Circus got away to a flying start, April 14. Kernersville, N.C., where the show has wintered, was thronged with people to witness the street parade, which was pronounced one of the most elaborate ever seen in that section with a motorized show. The opening performances were given without a hitch.

"Following is the program: Pageant, Humpty Dumpty in Fairyland, in the two rings and on the track, with Billie Hopkins as prima donna. No. 2. Ring No. 1—Bucking mules, with Dan Astella and Jimmy Carver, clowns; Ring No. 2—Bucking mules, Stick Pendleton and Harry Kilpatrick, clowns. No. 3 Swinging ladders, Jeanette Karsey, Florence Riddle, and Myrtle Karsey. No. 4. Ring No. 1—Pony drill, W.H. Hopkins, trainer; Ring No. 2—Pony drill, Fred Foster, trainer. No. 5. Clown number. No. 6. Introduces three troupes of trained canines; Ring No. 1—W.H. Hopkins; Ring No. 2—Mrs. W.H. Hopkins; stage, Harry Levine. No. 7. Iron jaw, Florence Riddle; revolving trapeze, Charlotte Levine. No. 8. Ring No. 1—Trained goats, Jimmy Carver; Ring No. 2—Trained goats, Stick Pendleton. No. 9. Ring No. 1—Slack wire, Walter Sykes; Ring No. 2—Tight Wire, Ralph Adams. No. 10—Posing horses, W. H. Hopkins and Fred Foster. No. 11. The clowns. No. 12. Swinging perch numbers, Walter Sykes, Florence Riddle, and

Myrtle Karsey. No. 13. Mule hurdles; Ring No. 1—Jimmy Carver; Ring No. 2—Stick Pendleton. No. 14. High-school horses, ridden by Billie Hopkins, Jeanette Karsey and Bobby Henry. No. 15. Single trapeze, Walter Sykes; double trapeze, the Levines; single trapeze, Ralph Adams. No. 16. Riding goats, dogs and monkeys; Ring No. 1—W.H. Hopkins; Ring No. 2—Archie Silvan. No. 17. The Girl in Red, introducing the entire company. Arthur Kellogg has a band of 12 men and furnished a musical program that put the show over with a bang.

Permanent Address: Box 625, Greensboro, N. C.



## ROUTE CARD

### SIXTH WEEK

- May 21—Delanson, N. Y.
- " 22—Rotterdam Jet, NY
- " 23—Ballston Spa, N. Y.
- " 24—Greenwich, N. Y.
- " 25—Cambridge, N. Y.
- " 26—Granville, N. Y.

### SEVENTH WEEK

- May 28—Corinth, N. Y.
- " 29—Broadalbin, N. Y.
- " 30—Canajoharie, N. Y.
- " 31—St. Johnsville, NY
- June 1—Dolgeville, N. Y.
- " 2—Newport, N. Y.

Silvan-Drew Circus route card used in 1928. Pfening Archives.

"Harry G. Karsey has the side show with a strong lineup of attractions, and business in his department was very satisfactory. Jack Kelley has the pit show.

"Master Mechanic J.A. Smith claims he has the best rolling equipment ever seen with a motorized show. W.H. Sanders, supt. of canvas, is proud of his all new spread, and the outfit certainly presented a very pleasing appearance on the lot. Mrs. J.A. Smith, who has charge of the candy stands and concessions, has a competent force of butchers. Jim Long has the package candy sale. Wilburn Binsfield has the lunch stand privilege with a very attractive outfit. Jack Riddle, who has the advertising banners, had an elaborate display at the opening stand, together with an auto parade in the big top."

It is interesting that the opening reviewer did not provide a truck count. Fortunately we have a count, along with several other bits of information, which comes under the signature

of Al F. Wheeler. In 1928 Karl Knecht, editor of *The White Tops*, mailed an extensive questionnaire to each circus making the tour that season. The Pfening Archives has the questionnaire which was filled out and returned by Silvan-Drew. Unfortunately, many questions were not answered, but for the question as to number of trucks used, the show responded, "25." The show answered "yes" that it would present a street parade, and a very important question as to the date the circus was founded was answered "1927." This latter was perhaps the most compelling reason for the author to believe that was the initial season for the show as a circus.

The route information throughout this article comes primarily from the files of the late Isaac Marks which have generously been made available to the author by his son, Don. There are some gaps in the routes and one of these comes immediately after the 1928 opening in Kernersville. The next date shown is Manchester, Maryland April 25. It appears that the show moved rapidly after opening through North Carolina and Virginia northward into Maryland.

The April 28, 1928 *Billboard* also carried the show's advertisement as follows: "SILVAN-DREW CIRCUS WANTS. To join on wire, strong baritone for Big Show Band. Young lady for ball game. Man for Popcorn and Cold Drink Stand. Experienced camp cook. Route, Delta, Pa., April 26; Rising Sun, Md., 27; Oxford, Pennsylvania, 28; Kennett, Pa. 30." It is interesting that Wheeler had the show routed early in the season into Oxford, Pennsylvania, his home and site of winterquarters for shows he formerly operated.

Throughout 1928 the show advertised frequently in *Billboard* as per this one in the May 12 issue: "SILVAN-DREW CIRCUS WANTS. To join on wire. Lithographer, who can also post. One more experienced Billposter. Musicians for Big Show Band. Producing Clown and Comedy Acts. Lady to run Ball Game. Route. May 9, Sussex, N.J.; 10, Warwick, N.Y.; 11, Central Valley, N.Y.; 12, Cornwall, N.Y.; 14, Walden, N.Y.; 15, New Paltz, N.Y."

The first road report on Silvan-Drew came in the May 19, 1928 *Billboard*. The article said the show had enjoyed excellent business through Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Jack Riddle was busy doing the legal adjusting, evidently replacing "Frank Belmont" who was listed in that job on the *Billboard* roster, handling advertising banners, and inside tickets. Harry G. Karsey, who had the sideshow, reported excellent business for his department. J.A. (Al) Smith, master mechanic, was proud of the rolling equipment. The show was moving like clockwork. W.H. Sanders, superintendent of canvas, with G.M. Ingalls as assistant, and a competent crew of workmen, always had the big top up on time. Jack Kelley had the pit show with a fine line of attractions, including Madame Mae-John, half and half. Business in his department had been big.

Nearly every week the show advertised for both performers and workmen, which gives reason to believe there were some serious personnel problems during the early weeks of the season. In the May 26, 1928 *Billboard*



there were two such "Want" ads. The first wanted, to join on wire "musicians to increase Big Show Band, clowns and fast comedy acts. Boss Property Man." Shorty Stoneking, John Felix, and George (Cookie) Brewer were asked to wire "Wingey" Sanders. The ad concluded advising sober workingmen who drove standard gear trucks to come on. The route with the ad listed all New York State stands, Greenwich, May 24; Cambridge, 25; Grantville, 26; Corinth, 28; Broadalbin, 29; Canajoharie, 30; and St. Johnsville, 31. The other ad wanted a prima donna doing other acts, lady for ball game, trombone for white band, and fast comedy act. Also needed were an assistant electrician, assistant mechanic, and sober workingmen who could drive trucks.

While Silvan-Drew was playing through New York State, Marlow Bros. Motorized Circus opened at Horsehead, New York, May 15, where it had been wintering. The show was expected to play territory in New York and Pennsylvania.

The June 9, 1928 *Billboard* carried the next report from Silvan-Drew. "The Notes," as the article was headed, said that "while the weatherman has been slightly unkind to the show the last few weeks business has averaged good with capacity houses at several stands. Two more trucks were added at Ballston Spa, N.Y. (May 23) to lighten the loads and handle the extra seats just added. At Greenwich, N.Y. the show had the pleasure of entertaining Sig Sautelle, who at one time had out a wagon show through the East. [Author's note. Sig Sautelle, who operated at times both rail and overland shows died just a few weeks after his visit to Silvan-Drew.] The LeVines have added a carrying perch act which is going over big. Mrs. Billie Hopkins was obliged to leave at Granville, N.Y. (May 26) for an appendicitis operation. She is getting along nicely." The article concluded: "the show has a few more stands in New York State and will then go into Vermont." Evidently these plans were changed, as the show cancelled the proposed route into Vermont and instead stayed in New York until moving south into Pennsylvania in mid July.

Silvan-Drew Notes column in the June 16, 1928 *Billboard* said that "while the weatherman still continues to be a bit unruly, business with the show has averaged good with capacity at several performances the past week. Visitors included Jerome T. Harriman of Downie Bros. A new menagerie tent and several more animals will arrive this week. Jeanette Karsey has been working one of the pony drills for some time and putting the number over in fine shape. Stick Pendleton had to close on account of ill health. His place in clown alley is being filled by the veteran, John Lancaster. Arthur Kellogg has a fine band of 10 men and their concerts before the show and the musical program goes over with a snap." The piece concluded by mentioning the show had a few more stands in New York.

The same issue also had an advertisement in which Silvan-Drew wanted to join, immediately, experienced circus workingmen who drove trucks. Also assistant mechanic and assistant electrician were needed. There would be year round work for reliable men with the show. Also wanted was a strong cor-

net for the big show band, plus clowns and comedy act. The route was listed as Weedsport, June 13; Wolcott, 14; Sodus, 15; Marion, 16; Palmyra, 18; Honeoye Falls, 19, all New York State.

The shortage of help didn't diminish and the following week Silvan-Drew advertised it wanted versatile single performers, clowns, musicians for big show band, a master of transportation who was a mechanic, a boss property man, and as always, workingmen who drove trucks. The all New York stands listed were June 21, Leroy; June 22, Pavillion; 23, Perry; 25, Mount Morris; and 26, Dansville.

# COMING



**SILVAN - DREW  
TWO RING  
CIRCUS**

MENAGERIE - MUSEUM and TRAINED ANIMALS



**THE LARGEST AND BEST MOTOR SHOW NOW TRAVELING**  
and the only really great show now exhibiting at popular prices. No other show can or will give you so much for your money.  
ACRES OF WATERPROOF TENTS - ELECTRIC LIGHTED  
100 - NEW ACTS FEATURES AND SENSATIONS - 100



**MORE TRAINED ANIMALS THAN ANY OTHER SHOW THAT HAS VISITED YOUR CITY**  
Beautiful and Diminutive Military Ponies - Highly Educated Dogs, Comical Trick Mules and Donkeys - Trained Goats - Trained Pigs, Camels, Trained Monkeys and Baboons, together with the paragon of all Trained Animal Displays.

**SILVAN - DREW'S FAMOUS DANCING HORSES**



**2 GRAND AND COMPLETE PERFORMANCES DAILY**  
AFTERNOONS AT 1:00  
EVENINGS AT 7:00

WILL ENHANCE AT  
**GREENWICH  
THURS. MAY 24**

Herald used by Silvan-Drew Two Ring Circus. Art work was by U.S. Litho Company. Pfening Archives.

The June 30, 1928 *Billboard* repeated the often mentioned statement that Silvan-Drew's advance was using 3 trucks and an agent's car and featured a complete line of

nearly all special paper. It was also noted the show was now having fine weather and business was fair to good at matinees with capacity nearly every night. On June 16 the show played Marion, New York where the Al F. Wheeler New Model Show once had winter quarters. Wheeler was kept busy entertaining friends, and locals provided two capacity houses for the stand. The midway presented an attractive appearance with two new lines of banners and all new tents. Harry Karsey was getting big business with the sideshow as was Jack Kelly with the No. 2 annex. Jim Long, who had the candy package privilege, was doing fine business as was Mrs. Arthur Kellogg with candy stands. Only one parade had been missed. The show was moving well and William A. McNeill, mechanic, was keeping all equipment in fine shape. Mrs. Charlotte LeVine had filled Mrs. W.H. Hopkins' place in the spec. putting over the singing numbers in a very creditable manner. Walter Jones was on the air calliope.

The same *Billboard* also carried two more Silvan-Drew Want ads. Needed to join immediately were a feature act for the big show, aerial and ground acts, versatile single performers, clowns who doubled band or concert. Also wanted were a strong cornet and baritone for big show band, and a man to handle the pit show, "must be strong all day grinder." Candy butchers were needed. Again the route was all for New York stands, June 27, Nunda; 28, Castile; 29, Fillmore; 30, Belfast; July 2, Belmont; 3, Alfred, and 4, Canisteo.

The other ad wanted a head cook, head waiter, man to handle candy package privilege, novelty man and butchers. The ad warned: "If you drink stay away."

The show's final date in New York state was sometime between July 4 and 10 because by the 11th the show had moved into Pennsylvania for a stand at Mansfield.

The July 14, 1928 *Billboard* had two Silvan-Drew want ads. In the first the show was looking for an experienced circus band leader who played a strong cornet on account of the current illness of Arthur M. Kellogg. Also needed were clowns doubling in concert or band and single lady performers who could double in big show or concert. The show was still looking for an assistant electrician and assistant mechanic. This time the route given was all Pennsylvania stands: July 11, Mansfield; 12, Wellsboro; 13, Troy; 14, Canton; 16, Wyalusing; 17, Montrose. The second ad wanted a candy package man and experienced butchers, and still no lady for the ball game had been located.

Also in the July 28, 1928 *Billboard* appeared the usual "Silvan-Drew Notes" column which said that ideal weather the past few weeks in New York and Pennsylvania had favored the show with capacity business at nearly every stand. Several new faces were in clown alley. Billie Hopkins had returned and was again leading the singing numbers in the spec. At Canton, Pennsylvania, July 14, Wheeler entertained many visitors, this being the home of Jesse Bullock, former treasurer of Wheeler Bros. Circus and also home of many former white top troupers. A new menagerie top and several new animals were added at



Hawley, Pennsylvania, giving the show an entire new spread of canvas. Good afternoons in the press at nearly every stand indicate the show was building good will for the future. New band uniforms and parade wardrobe had been ordered and would arrive in a few days when several new parade features would be added. When the article mentions a "menagerie top" this is taken to mean the tent which housed both the sideshow and menagerie. Photos indicate a single tent was used for this purpose.

While Silvan-Drew was in this territory, Downie Bros. and Dorsey Bros., both motorized circuses, were playing in New York state and also advertising in *Billboard* for acts and personnel. At the same time Hunt was playing on Long Island and in New Jersey. All three shows were often in the same or nearby territory and were potential opposition for each other.

The show moved from Pennsylvania into New Jersey sometime before July 25 at which time it was exhibiting in Netcong. Other New Jersey stands following Netcong came at Lincoln Park, Bernardsville, Metuchen, Matawan, and Freehold, played the last day of August.

The need for personnel continued and the following ad appeared in the August 4, 1928 *Billboard*: "SILVAN-DREW CIRCUS WANTS. To join at once. Banner Solicitor capable of doing legal adjusting. Concert people who double band or do big show acts. Versatile single performers. Lady for ball game. Calliope player doubling band or other work. Billposters (must stay sober). Sideshow acts and features. Long season. Salary always sure and prompt. Contact Al F. Wheeler. All New Jersey dates, Aug. 1, Point Pleasant; 2, Lakewood; 3, Toms River; 4, Barnegat; 6, Tuckerton; 7, Egg Harbor City; 8, Ocean City; 9, Tuckahoe."

The "Silvan-Drew Notes" in the August 11, 1928 *Billboard* reported that pleasant weather and profitable business continued during the past three weeks in the seaside resorts of New Jersey. Many visitors from Hunt's Circus spent the day on the Silvan-Drew lot at Matawan, N.J., July 30. The new sideshow top was received at Lakewood, New Jersey August 2. Instead of cutting down for the Southern tour the show would be considerably strengthened for its fall and early winter territory. At Point Pleasant, New Jersey on August 1 the show entertained Mrs. Frank A. Robbins and a party of friends from Jersey City. The next few weeks would be spent on the Eastern shore of Maryland and Delaware after which the show would head for the South, expecting to remain out until Christmas or later.

The same *Billboard* carried an ad for the show wanting to join immediately, "a lady to handle candy stands, novelty man, hustling butchers, concert people doubling band or big show, an assistant mechanic, seatmen, sober workmen who can drive trucks, and a calliope player doubling band." A long season was promised. Also in the ad the show wanted to buy a small, gentle elephant doing act plus cage animals. The route given consisted of all New Jersey stands: August 10, Millville; 11, Clayton; 13, Salem; 14, Penns Grove.

Evidently the show was unable to find the small gentle elephant it desired and as mentioned before there is no evidence Silvan-Drew ever had one at any time during its existence. CHS member Wes Herwig, who now owns the extensive elephant census files of the late Charles Davis has checked them and none is listed for the show.

While the show was in New Jersey the New York office of *Billboard* sent out a reporter to look the Silvan-Drew outfit over. His article, which was printed in the August 11, 1928 issue, was one of the most comprehensive reviews of the show ever run in that publication. It read as follows:

#### "SILVAN-DREW CIRCUS COMING TO THE FRONT.

"Lakewood, N.J. Aug. 4 - Al F. Wheeler, who has had much success in the circus world, is duplicating his former triumphs in directing A. Wachter's tented aggregation, the Silvan-Drew Circus, a motorized show deluxe that is now in its second season and is fast coming to the front. The show originated in Greensboro, N.C. three years ago under the title of the Dixie O.K. Vaudeville Show. Its present owner, A. Wachter, a business man of Greensboro was inspired with the success of his undertaking and decided to convert the vaudeville caravan into a motorized circus. The show has grown from 6 trucks in 1925 to 32 in 1928, and is still growing, with a bright future presaged. The outfit, when viewed by a *Billboard* representative at Lakewood made a splendid appearance. One and one-half ton highspeed trucks are used and the show has made all its moves this season promptly on schedule. All the rolling stock goes in the parade. Jack Riddle, who looks out for the exploitation end of the show, arranges in each town a tieup with the local automobile dealers, who enter a number of automobiles and trucks in the parade. This results, in most every case, of either an automobile or truck sale being made by the automobile exhibitors.

"The show uses two rings and the program opens with the spec called the 'American Girl,' featuring Billie Hopkins, prima donna; then the ludicrous bucking mule; swinging ladders, with Florence Riddle and Jeanette Karsey performing thereon; goat act; peppy clown number; double trapeze, and double ring act by Karsey sisters and Tom and Bessie Hayes,

riding goats, dogs and monkey; clown number; double trapeze, worked by Hayes and Hayes and the LeVines; two pony acts; return of the joeys; revolving trapeze, with LeVine and Florence Riddle introducing an iron-jaw act; posing horses; clown specialty; three dog acts, worked by W.H. Hopkins, Myrna Karsey and Harry Levine; clowns; high-school horses; two swinging perches, introducing Misses Riddle and Hayes; clowns; military pony drills; Tommy Hayes, wire act, and a carrying perch act by the LeVine Family; clowns; two mule hurdle acts, which concludes a 90 minute show.

"The big show seats 1,500—530 reserved and the balance blues. The admission is 25 cents and 50 cents for reserved. W. H. Hopkins is equestrian director. No single acts are used. The clown contingent is represented by John Lancaster, Fred Foster and Jimmy and Arthur Carver. The 10 piece band is under the direction of Charles A. Smith, who recently replaced Arthur M. Kellogg, forced to retire on account of bad health. Sixteen head of trained stock is used.

"Harry Karsey is manager of the side show, with the following attractions; Karsey's mind-reading act; Myrna Karsey, snake enchantress; Flossie La Blanche, strong woman; Jeanette Karsey, sword box; five cages of animals. Eleven nifty-looking banners adorn the front with door piece. On the ticket boxes are M.R. Cornelious and Fred Foster. Charles Burgess is the official custodian of the front. The pit show is featuring jungleland animals.

"John Lancaster is regarded as one of the oldest clowns in the business. For 52 years he has been entertaining the public. Ina Hayward, his daughter, has been appearing in The Merry Malones. There are 90 people on the payroll.

"Joe Brown has the cookhouse. Lee Wheeler has the candy stands and M. Mitchner is boss butcher with three assistants.

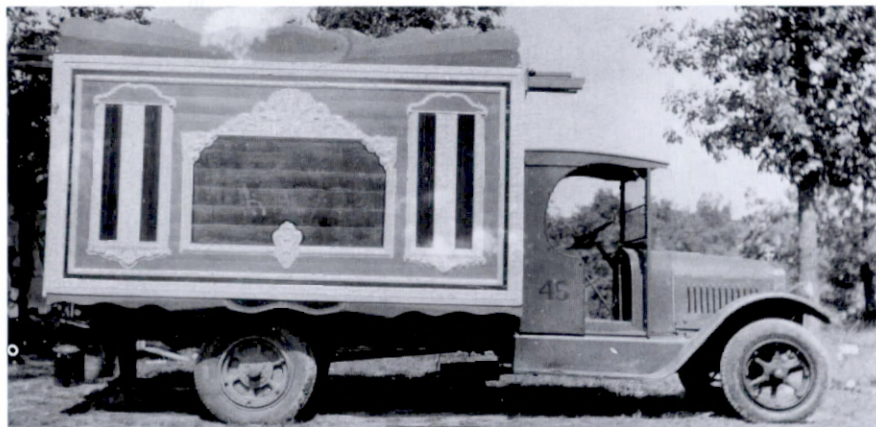
"The show has purchased new band uniforms from DeMoulin Bros. Walter Driver has completed the new menagerie top that is now on its way to the show.

"Twenty different styles of paper are used in addition to the special printing bearing the trade mark of the Standard Engraving and the Erie Lithograph. E. B. Walker is the brigade manager; Arthur Helmar has the lithographs and banners. There is also an opposition brigade. The billposters are Earl Torman, Frank Bell and Harry Elias.

Small stock tent on the Silvan-Drew lot, 1927. Pfening Archives.







"Wheeler has introduced some innovations since assuming management. For instance, the cookhouse stays on the lot until the next morning and serves breakfast before departing for the next stand. The 24 hour man lays out the lot the day ahead, which prevents delays, especially on cramped lots. Extra layout pins are carried in case of emergency.

"Walter Jones is the *Billboard* agent. National calliope, made at Kansas City, is used for street advertising and is giving excellent satisfaction. The following canvas is used; Big show, 80 foot round top with two 40s; side show, 50 with two 30s; dressing room 40 x 60; pit show 20 by 40.

"The staff comprises A. Wachter, owner; Al F. Wheeler, general manager; E.G. Smith, general agent; Lee Wheeler, treasurer; Jack Riddle, legal adjuster; M.R. Cornelious, secretary; Walter Jones, press agent; W. H. Hopkins, supt. of front door; W. H. Saunders, boss canvasman; G.M. Ingalls, assistant; Jack Kelly, sideshow boss canvasman; Joe Hall, electrician; Wm A. McNeill, master mechanic, and Tim Sumlin, supt. of ring stock.

"Manager Wheeler stressed the fact that he was operating what he termed a 'Sunday school' show and in the majority of spots playing the show is invited to return next year."

The August 25, 1928 *Billboard* noted that Silvan-Drew with continued good weather enjoyed satisfactory business in all of its New Jersey stands. There recently had been many visitors, several from the Hunt Circus. Florence Riddle, who was out of the program for a few days due to a slight injury, was now doing her act again. Lee Wheeler, who had been in the wagon for several weeks, had again left for the advance. Charles Burgess was redecorating and varnishing all parade trucks for the Southern trip. The show would have a few weeks on the eastern shore of Maryland and Delaware, then head for the South. Wheeler made a flying trip to New York the past week purchasing supplies and new equipment. Chef Joe Brown was again on the job in charge of the dining tent and all stomachs were correspondingly happy.

In the same issue the show advertised it wanted for the fall and winter season clowns and comedy acts, preference to those doubling band or concert. The ad concluded by promising low, sure winter salaries. Those interested were advised to contact Al F. Wheeler, Oxford, Pennsylvania. No route was listed.

There is a gap in the route we have from

**Silvan-Drew air calliope truck on the lot, probably 1928. The instrument manufactured by National was used for evening lot concerts as well as the morning street parade. Pfening Archives.**

Penns Grove, New Jersey on August 14 until September 5 when the show played Middlebury, Virginia. Evidently the show played some dates in Delaware and Maryland as mentioned in *Billboard* during this "missing time" on the route. Hunts Circus was also playing Delaware during this period.

Two more want ads came in the September 1, 1928 *Billboard*. The show needed for the advance a brigade agent who could both post and drive a car. Also wanted were experienced, hustling billposters and lithographers who could handle a brush. A long season with sure salary was promised but the ad cautioned, "if you drink don't write."

The second ad wanted a lady to run candy stands, butchers, a candy package man, a novelty man, and clowns who doubled band or concert. They still wanted that lady for the ballgame.

Nothing appeared in the trade publications concerning the show for the next couple of weeks. The September 15, 1928 *Billboard* carried an ad wanting a boss canvasman, candy butchers, a candy package man, a strong cornet for the big show band and clowns who could double in the band or concert. This time several days of route were run, all Virginia dates: West Point, September 12th; Tbona, 13th; Williamsburg, 14th; Dendron, 15th; Franklin, 17th.

Finally after several weeks absence the column, "Silvan-Drew Notes," appeared in the September 22, 1928 *Billboard*. It said that with ideal fall weather the show was wending its way southward and playing to good business at nearly all stands. While the show would put in a very long season, extensive preparations for enlarging and improving the outfit for next season were already well under way and the opening of the 1929 season would find the Silvan-Drew Circus one of the largest and finest motorized shows on the road. There had been many visitors lately including CFA member Melvin Hildreth of Washington, D.C., Jerome Harriman of Downie Bros., and John Pluto, former owner of Golden Bros. While the 1928 season would go on record as one of the worst for weather conditions in many years, the show so far had lost only 3 performances

and had few late arrivals. Another short notice said the show, while encountering some opposition from fairs, had played to uniformly good business in Virginia.

After the show played Franklin, Virginia on September 17, the route is missing until it was printed again in *Billboard* with the show in North Carolina at Yadkinville on October 10. Evidently the show continued on in the Old Dominion for several more stands, then moved on southward into its home state of North Carolina where it remained until the end of the season.

The October 13, 1928 *Billboard* advised the show was now back in its home state and business was big at nearly every stand. One stand was lost on account of high water and several soft lots were encountered. Recent visitors were from Ketrow Bros. show which had been playing near by; also Hunt Circus and the Cleo Hamilton show had personnel coming over to visit. The article noted there had been plenty of opposition from Hunt, Ketrow Bros., and Downie Bros., all billed within a radius of 100 miles in eastern North Carolina. The show added another new truck at Farmville, North Carolina, no date given. The article concluded by saying the show had enjoyed a very successful season and would be enlarged and improved for its 1929 tour.

The same issue had an advertisement in which the show wanted clowns doubling in concert, also blackface comedians, doubling in band or clowning. Versatile single performers were needed as was a baritone horn for the band. A long season was planned. All North Carolina stands listed were Pink Hill, November 7th; Richlands, 8th; Jacksonville, 9th; Swansboro, 10th; Maysville, 12th; Bayboro, 14th; Hobucken, 15th; Oriental, 16th; Vanceboro, 17th; Swanquarter, 19th; Belhaven, 20th; Pantego, 21st; Roper, 22nd; and Columbia, 23rd.

A week later *Billboard* had a short note which said Silvan-Drew was playing to good business in North Carolina and would remain out until December 1 or later.

The November 17, 1928 *Billboard* said that Fred (Butterfly) Stelling was now producing clown with the show, replacing John Lancaster, who closed to fill winter dates. The same issue reported that Ketrow Bros. was still playing in North Carolina and that the show had been offered for sale. A final note stated that Silvan-Drew was also in the Tarheel State continuing to play to satisfactory business. Evidently the take had been pretty good but the heavy rains that plagued the area in October may have been more severe at the ticket wagon than reported. Floyd and Howard King's 15 car Gentry Bros. was in the state during the powerful rains, and tradition has it that the show never recovered from the financial beating it took, even though it didn't fold until the fall of 1929.

Silvan-Drew called it a season after its stand at Jamesville, North Carolina on November 24 and went into quarters at Asheboro, North Carolina. The trade publications reported the closing and quoted Jack Riddle as advising this had been a banner season handling the advertising banners on Silvan-Drew. E.G. Smith also said he had closed a most successful season of 32 weeks



as general agent with the show and was going to his home in Atwater, Ohio for the winter. Smith advised he would again be with Silvan-Drew in 1929.

The December 22, 1928 *Billboard* said the show was wintering at the Randolph County Fairgrounds in Asheboro, North Carolina. The grounds and buildings were in every way well suited for housing the show, the main exhibition building being used to store the trucks, canvas, and other equipment, while there were many other buildings suitable for paint and blacksmith shops. Another building was used as a ring barn and animal house. All buildings were electric lighted and equipped with running water. Wheeler would again retain winter offices in Oxford, Pennsylvania, which would be in the charge of Lee Wheeler during the winter months. Assistant manager Jack Riddle was at home in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Several new trained animal acts were to be broken during the winter and quite an extensive menagerie would be added for next season's tour.

Other smaller shows on par with Silvan-Drew wintered along the eastern seaboard and could as usual be expected to make a run for the same territory come next spring. Hunt wintered at Pikesville, Maryland and Brison Bros. (Sam Dock's show) at Petersburg, Virginia.

The year 1928 was just about history. Business had been quite good despite the old trouper's adage that presidential election years were bad for business. Those shows which didn't do well during the season could blame the weather for most of their troubles. It had been a very bitter presidential campaign and election which saw the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, winning over the Democrat's Al Smith. Smith, the first Roman Catholic to seek the presidency, took a beating especially in the Bible Belt deep South where some of the firebrand elders proclaimed that if Smith were elected the Pope would soon arrive to rule the country. A little over 30 years later when Jack Kennedy did take over the White House and began his civil rights push some of these same elders in the South were heard to proclaim that they wished the Pope would hurry up and arrive.

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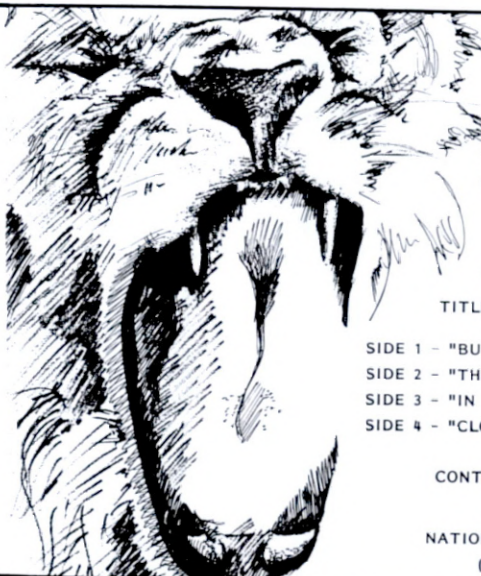
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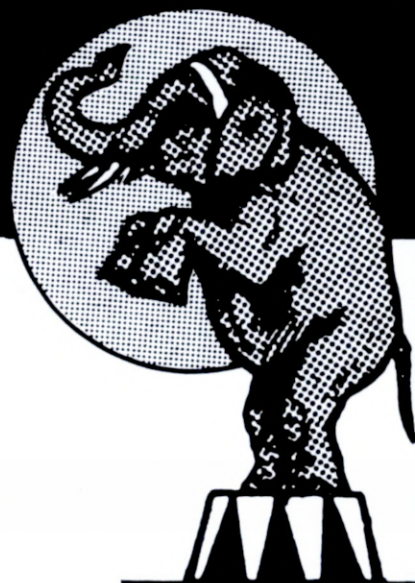
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# Clyde Beatty—Cole Bros. Circus Winterquarters

by Albert F. House

The "show on the road" has always fascinated the circus historian, but the circus in winterquarters is equally intriguing. If one considers the attraction of Baraboo, Peru, and Sarasota, the appeal even to the tourist is obvious. People are interested in what circuses do during their winter layover. A site in DeLand, Florida, formerly the home base of the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, a large railroad carnival, is now the winterquarters for the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus.

The site itself is located three miles west of the center of DeLand on New York Ave., directly across from the main north-south line of the Seaboard Coast Line railroad station. Although the station is designated *DeLand* it is about one mile from the end of town.

DeLand is the county seat of Volusia County. The county stretches from Daytona Beach on the Atlantic Ocean in the east, to DeLand, about forty four miles to the west. The town is situated in the center of the most westerly part of the county and is about forty five miles north of Orlando. Founded on December 6, 1876, by a New York manufacturer, Henry Addison DeLand (the town's name is spelled correctly with a capital "L"), DeLand was incorporated in 1882. Of note to the town is the John B. Stetson University, named for the Philadelphia hatmaker. Today DeLand has a population of 35,000, including suburbs, and is the major population center in the western part of the county.

The land currently used for the winterquarters was formerly the fairgrounds for Volusia County. The first fair on the property was held in 1923 on a 40 acre site. During the ensuing years buildings were erected to house the various exhibits. A 1960's picture postcard view of the property shows many buildings still standing in the front part of the site (west New York Ave.), leaving the rear part vacant except for a railroad spur from the south bound main line of the railroad.

For shows using the siding, the southbound train would pass the siding and then back into it. Ideally the wagon poles would face the caboose. The spur splits in two just as it is perpendicular to the main line. The picture shows a string of coal hoppers using the most accessible siding because it has a road on both sides of it. The other siding, to the north, remains in bad repair and obviously has not been used frequently. There is no road along the siding; however, the siding could easily be used for sleepers or stock cars. The combined length of the sidings is not long, but is capable of holding at least 9 double length cars for a railroad show.

The Volusia County Fair remained a viable entity until World War II. In 1939 as the war in Europe started, the fair failed, and the land reverted back to the county as prescribed by the fair's charter. During the war the site



Clyde Beatty equipment at winter quarters while show was being fitted into a truck circus during the winter of 1956-1957. Fred Pfening photo.

became an industrial area where gliders were built. After the war the property stood idle until, according to a longtime former employee, the Acme Circus Corporation bought the land in 1956 for approximately \$12,000 to \$12,500. At that time the Acme Circus Corporation owned the 15 car railroad circus, the Clyde Beatty Circus, which it had recently purchased, and needed a winterquarters. The principal managers, Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan, former Ringling personnel who lived in Sarasota and backed by dog track owner Jerry Collins and lawyer Randolph Calhoun, were anxious to winter the Beatty Circus in Florida. Since the former Volusia County fairgrounds was available, was well known as a winterquarters for the Johnny J. Jones Exposition Shows, and was fairly close to Sarasota, it was a natural choice. Additionally, it was suffi-

Clyde Beatty Circus railroad train at Deland winter quarters rail siding, circa 1958. Paul Horsman photo.

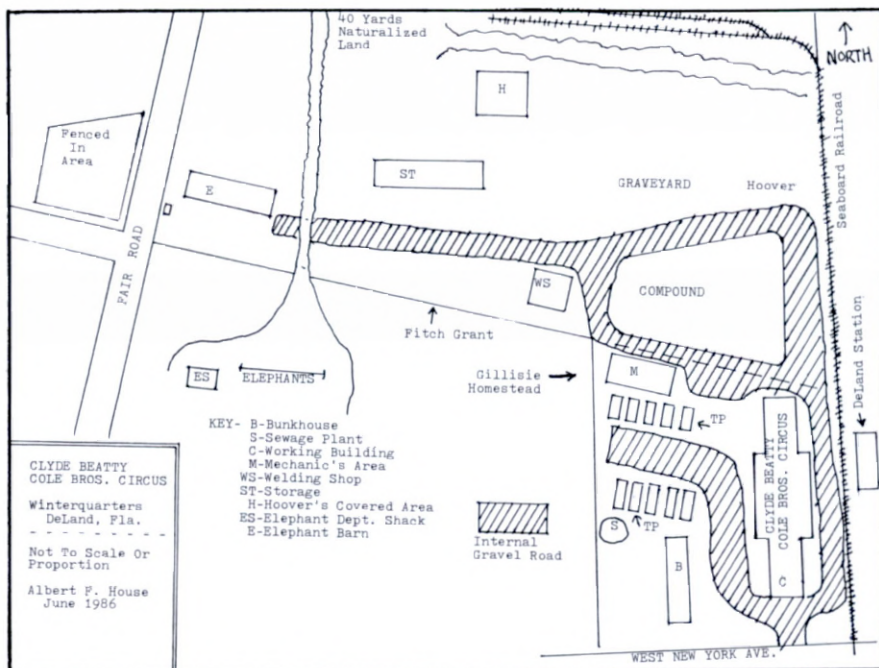


ently far enough away from Sarasota to minimize any rumors from circulating among circus people there.

McClosky and Kernan had recently rescued the Beatty Circus from bankruptcy in New Mexico, and, after an eight week layover to rebook the show, headed it east into Florida. At the 1956 season's end, the circus went directly to the Volusia County fairground's railroad siding which was big enough to handle the four coaches, two stock cars and nine flat cars. There were also enough buildings to provide immediate storage and shelter for all the activities needed at any winterquarters. During the winter of 1956 the managers decided to switch from rails to trucks. Thus during that winter a rapid changeover to a truck circus was accomplished. The railroad rolling stock was put up for sale, but there was little or no market for it because the Ringling show had also closed its railroad operation in July, 1956. Despite arguments at the time that a railroad circus in the East and Midwest would be a rousing success, the scrap dealer eventually won.

By the start of the 1957 season only a few of the former Beatty railroad show wagons remained. The five seat wagons were converted to over-the-road trailers as well as the portable





lavatory. The stakedriver and ticket wagon were placed on straight bed trucks. Of all the former railroad equipment utilized for the new truck circus, only the ticket wagon remains in use today. It is mounted on a truck chassis and serves as the caretaker's office. Some wagons were sold to the James E. Strates Shows, a major railroad carnival quartered in Taft just a few miles south of Orlando. All the rest were scrapped. Thus ended, for a while, the railroad circus in America, until the revitalized Ringling circus in 1960.

When the Clyde Beatty Circus returned to winterquarters in the fall of 1957 after a successful season, rebuilding work began in earnest, by adding new tractors and trailers and by upgrading certain trailers. Fortunately the fairground's buildings were intact despite little or no maintenance from the start of World War II until 1956. An effort had been made during the war to maintain them, but few improvements actually occurred. The quarters itself received attention in 1958 only after the circus was properly framed, the route established, and money spent on other non-critical items. Buildings were patched, roofs mended, vegetation cleared, and drainage ditches dug.

During that winter of 1957-58 the Cole Bros. title was purchased from Arthur Wirtz in Chicago, thus completing the title to Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. In the early 1960's the Acme Circus Corporation also fostered the development of two smaller circuses, the King Bros. Circus and Sells and Gray Circus. The King show evolved from the equipment of a small traveling show originally titled the Duke of Paducah Circus; the Sells and Gray show was built new from the ground up.

With the addition of two new circuses, the DeLand site was divided into work spaces for the two new shows. The Sells and Gray took the area now used by the mechanic (M on map and picture), while the King show took the area now used for Hoover and the graveyard (Ho and G on picture). All the elephants were

kept together in the elephant barn with the menagerie stock penned in one area. At maximum, each of the little shows carried three elephants, while the parent show carried eleven, for a total of seventeen elephants in all. While the three circuses never regularly carried any horses, they did have some ponies for a pony ride and some exotic beasts. Few caged animals were ever used on the shows except for Beatty's big cat act. Originally all three shows had a camel, a llama, and perhaps a little donkey or goat, but their lead stock was extremely limited. The parent show carried a combined side show-menagerie and exhibited a giraffe in the early 60's. A hippopotamus was exhibited even longer along with some chimps or snakes for a pit show attraction, but these animals were never used in the regular performance.

The winterquarters itself is comprised of two pieces of land taken from two separate grants. The most southerly grant, roughly rectangular in nature, the R.S. Gillesie's Homestead, fronts on New York Ave.; while the northerly grant, roughly a square piece of land called the Thomas Fitch Grant, contains Fair Road and the railroad sidings.

The Gillesie's Homestead tract and the

**King Bros. equipment in back yard at quarters, 1967. Fred Pfening photo.**



Fitch Grant tract are both the result of past Florida land booms. According to the plot plan maps of the area in the Volusia County Court House, building lots, streets, and utility lines already have been laid out. In reality, none exist. Someday they may, but currently there is little or no major development of housing projects as projected in these plans.

The piece of land from the Gillesie Homestead tract fronts on the western extension of New York Ave. and is approximately 450 feet wide. Its depth varies; the east side (railroad side) is about 367 feet deep, the west side, 640 feet. This portion of the site is the most visible to a passerby on New York Avenue.

The piece of land from the Fitch Grant is much larger. Its southeast border of about 1350 feet abuts upon the Gillesie's Homestead northern border of 450 feet forming a right angle. Both share a common eastern boundary line of the railroad right-of-way. The eastern line runs north and parallel to the railroad right-of-way for about a quarter of a mile, up to the county maintenance facility (top right of picture). The line then runs west to Fair Road for a quarter of a mile, then south paralleling Fair Road to the Fitch Grant line, including the fenced in part to the west of Fair Road, as shown on the map. In reality, some of the land has also been used by the county for roads, water drainage, and dead storage. Neither the plot plan nor road map accurately depict the current true usage of land.

According to historian Joseph Bradbury, the first recorded use of the Volusia County Fairgrounds as a winterquarters occurred after the season of 1927 when the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, a large railroad carnival, used the grounds. During the previous winters of 1925-26 and 1926-27 it had stayed in Orlando. The Exposition used the grounds during the winters of 1927-28, then 1928-29; returning for 1930-31 and 1931-32; then it had various other locations until the end of the 1939 season when it returned, using the grounds for two more winters. When the show pulled out in the spring of 1941, the fairgrounds housed no other shows until the Beatty owners purchased the facility in 1956. Sometime during the Exposition's occupation of the fairground, the roof adjacent to the railroad station was painted with the letters "Johnny J. Jones Exposition," which was still there, though faded, in 1957 when Bradbury toured the area.

A picture postcard of the circus winterquarters, used by the press department until the early 1970's, is the best source available for the overall view of the facility and provides



the best research tool. In the postcard the train in the foreground, heading to the middle right, is facing north. Since the picture was taken, some buildings have been eliminated for a variety of causes including fire, but most remain. The postcard will form the basis for studying the winterquarters.

In the left foreground of the postcard is the predominant building on the property (C on map and picture). About 100 feet from the front entrance of the quarters, with the Beatty-Cole title painted on it, is the most visible structure from New York Ave. and the train station. The building itself is about 150 feet long with entrances on the front and the east sides, and is about thirty feet wide. It also has a slightly wider section in the center, protruding and extending twenty feet long on both sides. Constructed of wood with metal siding and glass windows, the building is used extensively by the Beatty show during the winter season.

When the show arrives, the first job accomplished in the building is the reworking of the grandstand lumber. All the lumber, including chairs, bibles, jacks, railings, and seat blocks are cleaned, repaired, and if needed, painted. When these chores are completed, the grandstand lumber trailer, which had been previously unloaded and mechanically checked for soundness, is brought in, painted if needed, and properly reloaded, covered with canvas, and stored outside, waiting for the spring opening. The building then becomes the paint shop for some of the trailers. Weather permitting, trailers needing work are fixed outside and given their basic coat of white paint at that time. When dried, each unit is put under cover, and the scenic artist later paints on the scroll work and lettering as needed. The same work pattern is carried out on all the vehicles.

To the west of this building, but not shown in the postcard, is a bunkhouse for the workmen (B on map). Built after the picture was taken, the building is constructed of cinder blocks with a wooden roof, the only flammable part of it. The bunkhouse, about one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, is within a few feet of New York Ave., running along the western edge of the property. It has facilities for approximately fifty men and their personal belongings, a shower and lavatory area, and a recreation room. Also included under the one roof are the dining facility with a kitchen, a dining room, a storage room, a freezer and refrigerator space, and a scullery. The whole building is reminiscent of a military barracks and a company mess hall.



Aerial view of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. winterquarters in DeLand, Florida, from a picture postcard taken in the 1960s. See text for building identification. All illustrations from author's collection.

Trailer pads are located directly above the lettering on the roof of the foreground building on the postcard (T.P. on map). In the picture, a small building with a gable roof (I in picture) is seen but is now gone. In its place are newly built cement pads for house trailers, installed in 1984 and 1985. Included in the facilities at each pad are water, electricity, sewage and a telephone hookup for personnel who layover during the winter.

Also not shown on the postcard is a sewage disposal plant (S on map). It is located to the west of the bunkhouse and serves the bunkhouse and trailer pads.

To the north of the trailer pads are pictured two other fair exhibition buildings. The closest one to the railroad tracks was destroyed by fire. Its concrete floor remains in place and is now used as the trailer and truck repair area in good weather. When the weather is bad, work either stops or is done in the building directly to the rear (M on map and

Sells and Gray equipment at quarters, 1967. Fred Pfening photo.



picture). At one time these buildings served as the Sells and Gray Circus winterquarters. When that show permanently closed, the building was used as the storage area for the mechanics. With the conversion to diesel trucks, the building became crowded with parts for both gasoline and diesel engines. At the end of the 1985 season, however, the gasoline engines were phased out, and all the gasoline engine parts were sold or traded for diesel parts. By the 1986 season all diesel trucks were General Motors of the same make. Because all trucks were purchased used, but in good condition, major or extensive overhaul was unnecessary.

At the southeast corner of the Fitch Grant is a compound, formed in part by the buildings, its eastern portion bounded by the fence next to the railroad track. When the picture postcard was taken in the 1960's, all three circuses owned by the Acme Corporation were wintering in the compound. At the present time the area is surrounded by a high cyclone fence with barbed wire at the top for security purposes. Currently all the surplus equipment is stored here. There is a variety of rolling equipment covered with canvas sidewall for protection from the elements. Here also are stored some spare seat trailers, some additional serviceable general purpose trailers, and a variety of trailers used only for storage. In the storage trailers are the riggings and frames for the aborted indoor tour of 1980-81, some extra poles, and the equipment from Jimmy Harrington's Puerto Rican circus previously purchased by Frank McClosky. In the picture some King Bros. Circus trailers and some side show fronts can be seen.

On the top right of the photo to the north of the compound are two buildings which no longer exist. This area was the former area for storage of King Bros. equipment and its "winterquarters." The space between the buildings currently is used as a "graveyard" for former equipment (G on map and picture). Here can be seen discarded parts of truck





Composite photo looking north at entrance to compound. Left to right are the mechanic building with the doors open, the compound itself with the many trailers and tractors in storage, and the storage area of useable show trailers along the gravel road. The railroad is to the right of the #27 trailer. Dave Hoover's steel arena is at the end of the road to the right.

equipment, such as rear ends of tractors, parts of seat trailers, long discarded trailers from the original fleet dating back to the middle 1960's, and a few metal wheels. In evidence are also the remains of a canvas spool.

Currently in the northeast corner, where a building once stood, the wild animal act is located (H. on map and picture). During the winter of 1985-86, the show changed wild animal acts, with Dave Hoover being replaced by Yugoslavian Josip Marcan. Although Marcan did not stay in quarters, Hoover had his own wild animal compound there while he rehearsed daily. As of May, 1986, Hoover was still in quarters.

To the west, one building completes the compound which currently is used for the welding shop (Ws on map and picture). When new tractors are outfitted for show use, the welder can shorten or lengthen the chassis here if necessary. His crew services anything built for the show. The building is long enough for two trailers to be inside, but then is very crowded for any major work. Inside the building are all sorts of steel bars, sheets of steel, aluminum stringers for the reserved seats, and welding gas tanks, bars and rods. All the material needed for the complete rebuilding of any part or trailer may be obtained here. As of the fall of 1985, plans for a new 40 foot log seat trailer were being completed, and work was being started.

To the west, along the line of the T. Fitch Grant, is a stand of trees which extends west-



**Bunkhouse for working men, "B" on map. Dormitory is left two-thirds of building up to the closed door, while the remaining third contains the dining facilities.**

wardly past the former grandstand of the fairgrounds. During the winter the elephant picketline is staked out here. Not visible on the postcard is a small building used as a dormitory by the elephant men (E.s. on map). A water tap to fill the water tubs for the animals and a pole to carry electrical wires into the building are on the outside. The wooden building has metal siding, just like the rest of the fair buildings.

The elephants are housed in the reconstructed grandstand during inclement weather (E. Barn on map and picture). Currently the angled roof has been eliminated, and a roof with a slight pitch has replaced it. The steel supports of the old grandstand remain to chain the elephants. The entire area, open to the elements in the picture, has been walled in with cinder blocks and electrified for security purposes. Huge windows have been framed with bars and shutters as well to allow air circulation while still keeping the doors closed. To the north of the grandstand, where

**Graveyard, view looking east. Concrete pad in center seen as "G" in the postcard photo. On left is a rusting 24 foot seat trailer, while in center are two rusting of canvas spools. To right is a King Bros. office trailer.**



the infield of the track would be, the grounds have been allowed to naturalize so a buffer exists between the quarters and the pulp company using the railroad siding.

To the east of the infield are two buildings, both used for storage. In the building closest to the elephant picket line (ST on map and picture) there is a great deal of equipment left from the former King and Sells & Gray Circuses including some canvas, sidewall and portions of the big tops; some jacks, stringers and seat boards from bleachers; some spare parts from the side shows; and other material left over that could not be readily used by the Beatty-Cole show. To the north stands a square shaped building assigned to Dave Hoover for his cats (H on map and picture). It is empty of any useable material, but contains some old, dusty hay, some fencing as used in a dog kennel, some old pieces of cages, and scrap metal. While the storage building is closed with only places to peek into cracks, this one is fully open and to full view.

About sixty yards to the north lies the railroad siding. The area between the buildings and the sidings, allowed to naturalize with many small trees and bushes, is no longer being used by the circus and nicely serves as a buffer to the pulp company which leases the siding. While walking north along Fair Road, one might see a faded sign noting that the road is private property and is closed annually for a brief period. The Volusia County Sheriff's Dept. uses the road as access to repair shops and other county facilities. Also along the road can be found the source of water for the site: a pipe emerges from the ground just behind the elephant barn and then, reburied, continues to the elephant department sleeping area.

To the north of the entire quarters area, is a section of very soft ground large enough on which to erect a big top; however, it is completely devoid of any structure and is difficult to walk on, let alone drive on. Currently the area is being left to grow to provide a further barrier to the pulp company's operation to the north.

Thus the entire working area of the winter-quarters is centered around the New York Ave. end of the former fairgrounds. The buildings





**Elephant department shack. It contains room for six men, but only four live there during the winter. It has no running water, but does have electricity. Elephant picket line outside left. Note metal exterior of building.**

there provide adequate space for the necessary work. Since the buildings are widely separated, the threat of fire going from building to building tends to be remote. Also, the bunkhouse, which has continuous human activity and is most susceptible to fire, is far removed from the other buildings where the actual winter refurbishing is done. Since the picture postcard was taken many years ago, the size and number of trees have changed considerably. The tall palm trees around the center compound are mostly gone, victims of cold weather; a cyclone fence has replaced them. All useable material is now stored in the central compound. A spare big top is bagged and placed upon a flatbed trailer ready to be shipped to the show in event of an emergency. With the strategic location of the interstate highway nearby, the big top is at most only three days away from the show on the route it currently plays.

Since its original occupancy of the fairgrounds in 1956, the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus has flourished. The first of Acme's subsidiary shows was King Bros. Circus, operated by the General Operating Co., which went on the road in 1961. As mentioned before much of its equipment came from the 1960 Duke of Paducah Circus. King's first road manager was Robert (Bob) Snowden and the show wintered in DeLand each year of its existence with one exception. At the conclusion of the 1963 tour the show was in California and wintered in El Centro. The final season for King Bros. was 1978. The title and some of the equipment were used by other parties for a tour of several weeks in the fall of 1980.

The second of the Acme shows was Sells and Gray Circus which went on a regular season tour for the first time in 1962. (The title had been used on a small show which toured Florida during the winter of 1960-61). William (Bill) English, who had been the sideshow manager of Beatty-Cole, was the first road manager of Sells and Gray. That show's operating company was Kit Operating Co., named for English's wife. Both of the smaller shows were under the parent company, Acme, but were operated separately. Similarly, the



**Interior of elephant barn, looking east. Note vertical steel supports remaining. It was originally the fairground's grandstand for auto racing. The top has been cut off, a roof installed, and the remaining part bricked in. It is large enough for about 20 elephants.**

Sells and Gray show wintered in DeLand every year except 1965-66 when it was in the Sarasota area. The show closed in midseason 1978 when its equipment was returned to DeLand, except the two elephants, who finished the season with King Bros. Circus. The primary reason for the demise of both shows was the illness and death on November 8, 1979 of Frank McClosky. He had been the prime mover to keep both the shows on the road.

During the years when all three of the Acme Circus Corporation shows were in DeLand, some historians remarked that Deland was like Peru, Indiana, when the former American Circus Corporation quarters wintered as many as three large railroad shows in the late 1920's. By 1981 all the original managers of the circus had died, as well as one of the original backers, Randolph Calhoun. The sole surviving member of the original four, Jerry Collins, decided to divest his interest in the circus. Instead of selling, he persuaded the Florida State University to accept the circus as a gift. He donated the circus to the university, who in return sold the circus in February, 1982, to the present owners, John W. Pugh and E. Douglas Holwadel, both members of the CHS. Pugh had formerly been the manager in charge of running the show on a day to day basis and was quite familiar with the operation.

For approximately \$2 million dollars,

**Dead storage building, containing miscellaneous debris from King Bros. and Sells & Gray.**



Holwadel, a South Carolina cement company executive, provided access to the financing of the circus. The two new owners formed a holding corporation entitled Cole Bros. Circus and purchased from the university all the assets and liabilities of the circus. However, the new owners only purchased from the university the actual land needed to run a winterquarters efficiently. The original piece of land of the Gillespie Homestead was acquired intact, but only part of the Fitch Grant was needed. The new southern boundary extends west from the railroad tracks to and including part of Fair Road (but not across Fair Road into the fenced area as shown in the map), then northerly on the east edge of Fair Road about 200 feet, then directly eastward to the railroad. The railroad boundary remains the same. The university still owns the remaining property up to the railroad siding, but wants to sell it to the circus.

In 1983 the circus also moved its business office from Winter Park, Florida, near Orlando, the home of former owner Frank McClosky, to an area zoned for business in DeLand. The new business office is a small converted home at the west end of Martin St. in the northwest part of town. Behind the office is a building used for a printing plant





Building once used for Dave Hoover's cats. It is large enough to house 20 cats in traveling cages.

run by John Rose. The offices have all the room needed for booking, marketing, public relations, plus a private office for Pugh. Bruce Pratt handles the marketing and public relations, while Renee Storey Pratt does the booking and the myriad details associated with it.

The new owners, John Pugh and Doug Holwadel, have continued to build the show into the largest tented circus in the East. As a circus historian, one can only hope that the show continues to thrive and winter in DeLand for countless seasons.

An article of this magnitude requires the aid and support of many people. I wish to

thank the management of the Beatty-Cole Circus for their aid, especially John Pugh and Doug Holwadel. Pugh allowed me free access to the site for two and one half days and gave me a guided tour answering all questions. Doug Holwadel spent nearly an hour on the phone with me discussing the business aspects of wintering a circus. I also spent time with Renee S. Pratt and Bruce Pratt in the business office on Martin St. in DeLand, which was helpful to me.

Additionally, I would like to thank Edna Antes, the show's treasurer from 1956 until early 1977, for the information she shared about the quarters during the early '60's. Credit also goes to Joseph T. Bradbury for the encouragement and for much of the



Bruce Pratt and Renee S. Pratt stand in front of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. corporate offices on Martin St. in DeLand. Plaque between the Pratts is only indication of the circus.

background material about the carnival's usage of the land. Other material about the former fairgrounds was supplied by the current manager of the Volusia County Fair, T.R. Townsend, of DeLand. The photographic reproductions were supplied by Ed O'Neill, of Bayonne, New Jersey. Help in reading the tax maps was supplied by Jay VanDelden, tax assessor in my hometown, Oakland, New Jersey. However, this article could not have been done without the help of my wife Maxine. To her I owe a big thanks.

**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS**



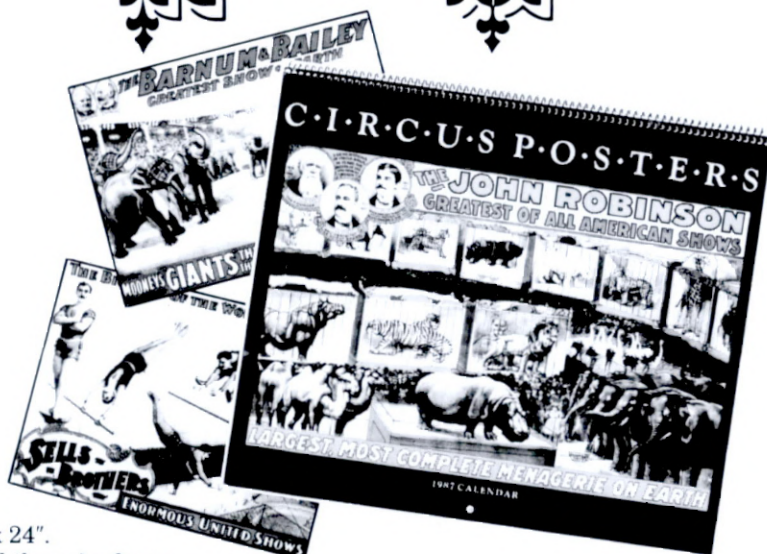
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BRING MILLER BROS.  
CIRCUS**



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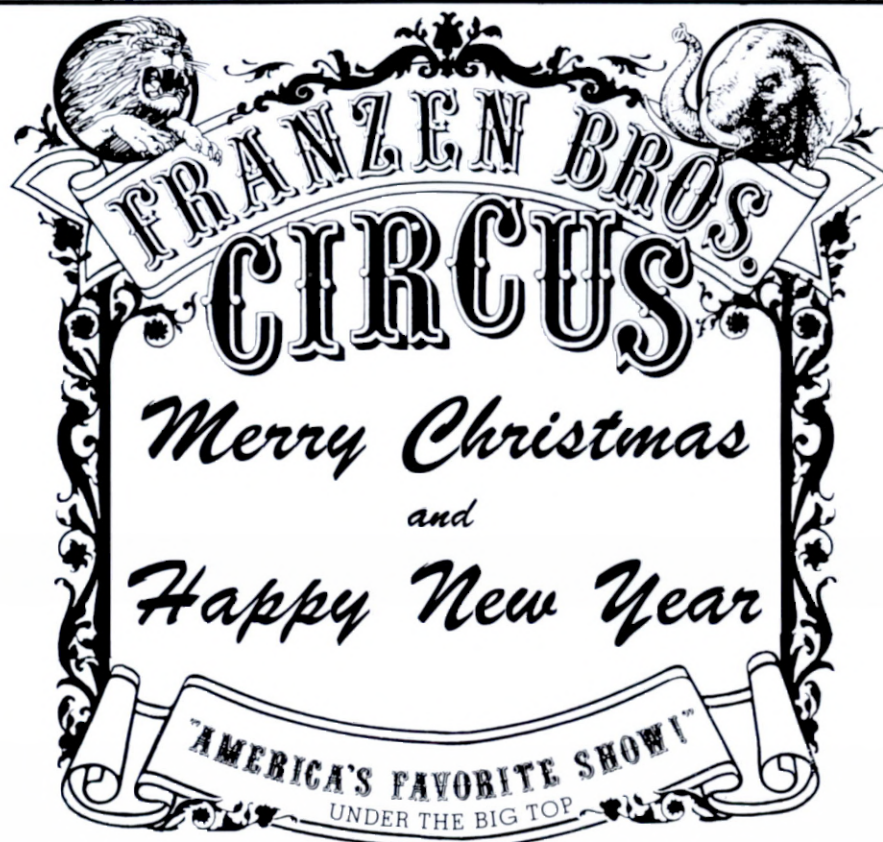
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Although health problems have curtailed our activity, we remain avid fans and wish each and every one of you a very—

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

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# ROYAL HANNEFORD CIRCUS



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

to our Circus Friends  
Everywhere

Tommy, Strupp and Nellie Hanneford  
and all of the performers and staff of the  
**ROYAL HANNEFORD CIRCUS**  
and  
**ROYAL SANGER CIRCUS**



# AL G. BARNES' CIRCUS

## 1927 SEASON

by Chang Reynolds

The first news from the Al G. Barnes' Circus winter quarters to reach the press in January 1927 was to the effect that James J. Jeffries, boxing's former heavyweight champion, and Tom Sharkey, the sailor-fighter of the early '20's, had signed a 36-week contract to appear with the circus. Manager Charles C. Cook of the show had made the arrangements. At the same time it was announced that Rex de Rosselli had left the Barnes' show and had been immediately signed by the American Circus Corporation. Rosselli's first task was to direct the opening and closing "specs" for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. He had been with the Al G. Barnes' Circus since 1919 when he began as a member of the press with the show.

In early February, Al G. Barnes prepared to pay \$30,000 to the Department of Internal Revenue as the first installment of \$175,000 which he was required to pay as a compromise settlement on income taxes that were overlooked by the circus management for the years 1917, 1918, and 1919. Barnes also paid a \$5,000 fine for the failure to make a return for those years.

The most outstanding news of the spring concerned the purchase of 300 acres of land fronting three-fourths of a mile on Valley Boulevard. This acreage was located east of Los Angeles between El Monte and Baldwin Park. According to reports, obtaining this land cost Al G. more than a million dollars. At the same time Barnes announced that he would subdivide the Washington Blvd. property of some seventy acres as soon as the circus quarters could be moved to the new site.

Barnes' plans for the Baldwin Park site, which was under cultivation with a fine irrigation system fed from a number of wells, included the building of homes for the circus employees, the construction of new winter quarters, and the subdivision of the rest. The

new quarters had access to the Pacific Electric Railway and the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Early in March it was reported that rehearsals were underway for the new "spec," entitled *Aladdin and the Parade of Gold*. Morrie B. Streeter was responsible for the music and direction. Other activities at the quarters reported at this time concerned work in films and the employment of displays for the side-show. Curley Phillips, Danny McAvoy, Tom Plank, Jack McAfee and Martino Lowande, Jr. (all clowns) were working in a Lon Chaney film at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. MGM released at least three Lon Chaney films in 1927. They were "London After Midnight," "The Unknown" (with Joan Crawford), and "Mockery." It is not known in which of these the Barnes' clowns appeared.

Kinko Sunbury, clown, was in vaudeville in Los Angeles. The Klinkhardt Midget Troupe, directed by Austin C. King, had a five-week engagement at the Million Dollar Theatre, Los Angeles, as a prologue to the Harold Lloyd film, "The Kid Brother." Gertrude Hall, "the Scottish Countess," was employed at the Hal Roach Studios and also was working for the Columbia Film Company. She was later one of the features with the Barnes' side-show. Others employed by Allen C. King for the Barnes' annex were Professor Fay, magician and lecturer; Jolly Josephine, fat girl; Tex Madsen, giant; Mr. and Mrs. Price, tattooed artists and sword box; Chick Townsend,

**Team of working elephants moving wagon out of a shop building at the Al G. Barnes quarters on Washington Boulevard (Culver City-Palms-Barnes City) in the early spring of 1927. Note at far right the Three Oval Mirror tableau which formerly served as the No. 1 bandwagon in the Barnes street parades. This is one of the last known photos of this wagon. Frank Pouska Collection.**



snakes; Giovanni Bros., piano accordians; Prof. Everley and his eight-piece Black Bottom harmonists and Alabama minstrels; Paul Desmuke, armless wonder (who also doubled for Lon Chaney at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in the film, "Alonzo, the Armless"); and Mme. Elsie Baker, "two bodies in one." King was scheduled to make the first opening; Chick Townsend, second openings and on the No. 1 ticket box; D.D. Hall, No. 2 ticket box; Charles Lovelace, No. 3 box and inside tickets. It can be seen from this report that the nearness of Hollywood was a profitable location for the Barnes' employees during the winter months. [Note: This writer found that while working at the Selig Zoo in the 1930s he could earn ten dollars a day when on a movie lot with various animals. If the opportunity occurred to work in front of a camera another dollar and a half was added to the daily fee.]

The staff for the Al G. Barnes' Circus in 1927 included Charles C. Cook, Manager; J.B. Austin, General Agent and Traffic Manager; Frank Rooney, Superintendent; R.G. Marcos, Auditor; William Peck, Personal Representative for Al G. Barnes; H.T. McGlathery, Treasurer; Dick Wakefield, Timekeeper; John T. Backman, Equestrian Director; Nels Lauston, Superintendent of Reserved Seats; and Charles Redrick, Musical Director.

The advance staff consisted of H.L. Massie, Contracting Agent; W.J. Long, Contracting Agent; Jack Glines, Manager. Advance Car No. 1; Jack Austin, Brigade Agent; Jack Beach, Advance Representative; H.J. Baker and T.J. O'Brien, Special Agents; C.J. McDonald, Contracting Press Agent; Elmer Lingo and Lee McDonald, 24-hour Agents; and A.H. Priddy, Director of Public Relations.

The Department Heads were Whitey Johnson, Superintendent Big Show canvas; Frank Schank, Superintendent Side-Show canvas; Mike Tshudy, Superintendent Baggage Stock; Judd Bullock, Trainmaster; J.O. Nance, Superintendent Elephants and Lead Stock; Bloomer English, Superintendent Ring Stock; "Whitey" Versteeg, Superintendent Lights; Bob Hampton, Superintendent Properties; Walter Winfree, Blacksmith; and Robert Brinley, Dogs, Monkeys, etc.

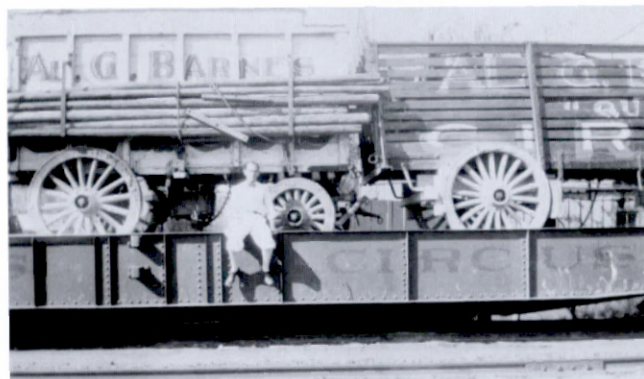
To the astonishment of most circus workers the long-established cook house was eliminated in 1927. Replacing it was a cafeteria operation with the slogan "He pays our salaries - we eat where we please." The report on this innovation indicated that the salaries of the employees had been adjusted to meet the new conditions, and everyone with the show paid his or her own board. The management of the circus had nothing to do with the operation of the cafeteria. It was operated by a Los Angeles firm and the circus folks could eat there or elsewhere. The Script Book long in use by the show was discontinued and cash only was accepted in the cafeteria. Don Francis reports that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with this arrangement and he doubts that it operated for the full season. In any event, by 1928 the traditional cook house was again in operation.

The 1927 season of the Al G. Barnes' Circus opened with a two-day stand at San Diego on 26-27 March with good business. From that city it moved to Santa Ana, Redondo Beach,





Al G. Barnes loaded flat cars at San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. The Scaperlanda brothers, Tom and Pasco, early members of the organized circus fans, took



Al G. Barnes baggage wagons loaded on flat car, San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. Pasco Scaperlanda is seated on the flat. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.

Inglewood, Long Beach, Riverside, Pasadena, and San Pedro. It then made the short run to Los Angeles for a seven-day stand (4-10 April) on the lot at Washington and Hill streets. Business was very good for the entire week.

The program of the Al G. Barnes' Circus consisted of a grand opening spectacle and thirty-two displays, of which twenty-seven were triple displays, that is, simultaneous presentations in the two end rings and a center arena. The time of the show was two and one-half hours with about a twenty minute concert. The reviewer stated that there was little possibility of the running time being reduced. Don Francis, however, recalls that it was completed in two hours, indicating that it was a very fast performance for the number of acts presented.

The pageant, *Aladdin and the Parade of Gold*, opened with a grand ensemble of beautifully costumed people and variously bedecked animals with colorful robes. This display circled the hippodrome track twice and then exited. "Spud" Redrick's band struck up an Oriental tune and, with a large explosion, Mephisto bounced into the arena. He represented the force of evil while Aladdin, the force of good, refused to turn over to Mephisto the magic lamp of gold after he had been trapped in the Cave of Bewilderment. The locale was situated in the forests of India

Cages on Al G. Barnes flat cars, San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.

a fine set of photos when the show played their home town of San Antonio that season. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.

where Mephisto and Aladdin struggle for supremacy with the latter finally the victor. Various nymphs, fairies, and dancing girls added excitement and beauty to the scene and between the two parts of the spectacle the Klinkhardt Midgets appeared in a "March of the Wooden Soldiers."

Following the spec Al G. Barnes, on his fine horse, "Fulldress," circled the track to great applause. The third display featured the twelve Royal Lilliputians (Klinkhardt), accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Skyhigh, giant and giantess (Tex Madsen and Gerta Hall), and Liu Yu Chan, Chinese Giant.

Display No. 4 was labeled "Beauty and the Beast." It featured the hippopotamus, "Lotus," driven around the track by one of the show girls. This big beast was followed by "Joe Martin," the ape featured in films, and then came the clowns, headed by stilt-walker Toby Tyler.

The next display had two pony acts in each ring worked by Roy Howze and William Keffer. The center ring act (arena) featured Louis Roth with the Royal Bengal tigers.

Display No. 6 brought on the elephants in each end ring. The pachyderms in Ring one were worked by Billie Mack, Nellie DeMott and Irene Murray, while those in Ring two were presented by Patsy Clancy, Ida Behee, and Helen Howze. The arena feature was a tiger riding on a horse directed by Alma Taylor.

Display No. 7 brought in the clowns: Toby Tyler, Bill Tate, Bill Ward, Curley Phillips, Danny McAvoy, Ray Harris, Milt Taylor,

Shorty Hackensmith, Dutch Marco, Bob Gilbert, Little Bozo, Frank Cherry and Jack McAfee.

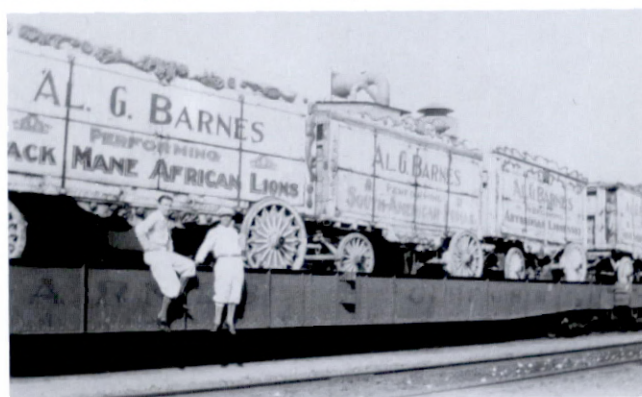
The eighth display included tandem horses with girl drivers in the end rings and Alma Taylor with a large group of leopards and pumas in the arena. Display No. 9 featured Arthur Burson and his "slide for life"—he slid on his feet from the top of the tent to the ground. With Burson, on the track, were the football elephants. Burson was followed by leaping hounds in both rings and on the track for the tenth display.

Display No. 11 included a group of male lions in the arena, worked by Bert Nelson, and the Stick Davenport troupe of riders in one end ring and the Martino Lowande riders in the other.

The twelfth display had pony acts in each end ring with Louis Roth's tigers in the arena. Then came the elephants with clowns in the end rings, a riding tiger in the arena presented by Alma Taylor, and more clowns on the track.

Alma Taylor worked pumas in the arena for display No. 14. There were tandem acts in each ring. The next display had the leaping hounds again in both rings and the arena. The mid-point of the performance was reached at

Al G. Barnes cages loaded on flat cars, San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. Although there was some variation in the color scheme most of the cages that season were painted white. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.







Al G. Barnes elephants unloading in the San Antonio, Texas rail yards, November 11, 1927. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.

Display 16 which featured Bert Nelson with male lions in the arena and riding acts in each end ring.

No. 17 was exceptionally greeted by the patrons. It featured lady performers on sixteen illuminated ladders over each ring and between the outside quarter poles while at each end of the arena clowns worked on revolving ladders. Zebras were featured in each end ring during the next display. There was a riding lion in the arena.

No. 19 brought on Liberty horses in each end ring worked by Max Sabel and Roy Howze, while Herman Zigler presented a mixed group in the arena. The balloon lion followed. For the next display three wire acts were preceded by a concert announcement. Then came the big polar bear act in the arena, featuring Bert Nelson. There were dog acts in the two rings at the same time.

No. 22 display was the old familiar production of clowns and the singing mule. After this departed there was an iron-jaw presentation with riding acts in each end ring. Display No. 24 had birds and traps in each end ring with a trapeze performance over the arena concluded by a heel swing. Don Francis explains the "birds and traps" feature: it included macaws, parrots and cockatoos. The "traps"

Cage wagon on the Al G. Barnes lot, San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.



Tom Scaperlanda on the Al G. Barnes lot, San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. In back zebras are tied to a baggage wagon. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.

were perches on which the birds rested. When hoisted to the top of the tent they swayed and were jiggled by an attendant. This caused the perches (traps) to swing and the birds, in order to keep their balance, would flutter their wings. Spotlights on the birds enhanced the act.

Posing occupied both rings and the arena for No. 25 while the next display featured a midget riding act in Ring 1; another riding act in Ring 2; and a lion riding an elephant in the arena. In Display No. 27 there were ring and perch acts in Ring 1 and web over Ring 2; and Captain Charles' Seal Act in the arena. Next came the Famous Riding Four directed by Austin King with acrobats in each end ring. The Famous Four consisted of four zebras ridden by a chacma baboon, a large dog, a bear, and a leopard.

For Display No. 29 there were three menage acts—two in each ring and one on the track. Then came the elephants in each ring and "Rex," the riding lion, in the arena presented by Bert Nelson. The next to the last display, No. 31, featured Louis Roth with a large group of female lions in the arena and camels in Ring 1 and camels and oxen in Ring 2. The last display was the Grand Finale Spectacle, "America." It was followed by hippodrome races and Roman standing races.

Not mentioned in this review was the prima donna, Dorothy Chung, who also played the leading part in the "Aladdin" spec. According to Don Francis' report of the show, she rode a white horse while singing and after a large flock of white pigeons was released, the birds flew around the tent and landed on her horse and her outstretched arms. Miss Chung also acted as the interpreter for Liu Lu-Chung, the

Chinese giant, who spoke a limited amount of English.

The lady performers with the show were Ethlyn Allis, Anna Burge, Patsy Clancy, Bertha Conrad, Laura Evans, Andrea Gallagher, Margaret Graham, Irene Grizelle, Stella Keffer, Betty Kenyon, Pearl Lingo, Ida Behee, Billy Cavanagh, Dorothy Chung, Billie Fisher, Ethel Greer, Helen Howze, Jewell Jackson, Elizabeth Loring, Irene Murray, Billie McGlathery, Stella Smith, Alma Taylor, Anna Velde, Dixie Whitaker, Bertha Willis, Maude Matlock, Bertha Matlock, Babe Le Tourneau, Goldie Backman, Corrine Leroy, Billie Niquette, Alice Parker, Gertrude Phillips, Genevieve Stevenson, and Peggy Wilson.

Gentlemen performers were: A. Burson, C.C. Charles, F. Cherry, Liu Yuen Ching, Stick Davenport, W. Dupree, R. Harris, W. Keefer, M. Lowande, Skinny Matlock, Earl Behee, Roy Howze, Jack Lampe, James Niquette, Jack McAfee, Dan McAvoy, W.A. Phillips, Johnny Pizzo, Fred Marco, Louis Roth, Max Sabel, Mark Smith, Bill Tate, Milt Taylor, Weldon Matlock, Toby Tyler, A. Papieto, G.

Tom Scaperlanda in front of an Al G. Barnes cage wagon with corner statues on the lot at San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.







Swanson, H. Wordin, Bill Ward, Bert Nelson, and Letourneau.

The Concert featured the James J. Jeffries and Tom Sharkey boxing exhibition—they worked three rounds. Also included was a musical revue (according to the route book) or a wild west presentation (according to a review from San Francisco.)

Austin C. King's side-show had settled down to the following displays after the original list reported earlier: High Bill and Victoria Hall, giant and giantess; Professor Price, tattooed man; Jolly Ethel, fat girl; Ethel Price, sword box; Paul Desmuke, armless wonder; Anita, snake charmer; Nabor Felix, clay modeler; Fay, the mystery man and inside lecturer; Mme. Elsie, two-bodied woman; Everly's ten-piece minstrel band; and Alec Gray's bagpipers.

After Los Angeles the Barnes' show made its usual stands in the southern coast cities and then jumped from Santa Paula to Bakersfield. It then made the towns in the Central Valley and along the coast before moving into San Francisco for four days on 28 April. In this city the show broke in a new lot at 16th and Bryant streets in the Mission district.

Boxers Tom Sharkey (left) and James J. Jeffries, former world's champion (right) with the chimpanzee "Jiggs" at the Al G. Barnes quarters on Washington Boulevard just prior to start of the 1927 season. The two fighters put on a three round exhibition match in the Barnes concert during the 1927 season. Frank Pouska Collection.



Al G. Barnes Circus on the lot at San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 1927. In center foreground is the sideshow bannerline and tent with the big top in rear. At left are concession stands and the marquee. Scaperlanda photo in the Joe Bradbury Collection.

The show had passed up San Francisco in recent years due to the unavailability of a suitable lot. Visitors to the show were Harley Tyler (from the quarters in Palms); Wallace Ware, western representative of the show; J.H. Dyer, general manager of the Southern Pacific Railroad; Ansel Robinson, W.V. Hill, E.K. Fernandez (from Honolulu); and Mike Golden, former circus owner.

It was reported about this time that the new winter quarters would be located in Sacramento, but this was almost immediately refuted by a statement that the new wintering place would be in Baldwin Park. Charles C. Cook reported that there would be a \$300,000 Smithsonian-Barnes Museum in Portland, Oregon, in the near future. This, of course, came to nothing. Word soon came from J.B. (Ben) Austin, general agent, that the Barnes' show would not tour the Eastern States this season. Its tour would be confined to Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Oakland, California, was a three-day stand in early May—only four days after the San Francisco dates—and then the show continued north and reached Oregon on 16 May. The tour of the northwestern states followed with three days in Portland, Oregon, and three more in Seattle. A total of nine days was spent

in Oregon and ten in Washington. Little or no news from the show was included in *The Billboard* June and July. The Canadian tour for 1927 began on 7-8 June with a two-day stand at Vancouver. Three more stands in British Columbia were filled before the tour in Alberta which included five cities. Saskatchewan provided seven dates and then the show picked up Lethbridge, Alberta, on its way back to the States.

The first town in Montana, 27 June, was Sunburst. An additional seven cities brought the show to the western border of the state and then it moved to Spokane, Washington. During the middle of July the circus followed its practice of jumping back-and-forth between Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Utah. It must be said that the route was not as erratic as in recent years—usually several dates in a state were played in succession. The Barnes' Circus reached Salt Lake City, a two-day stand, on July 22-23. Five more towns in Utah were played before the show entered Colorado at Delta, on the 28th of the month. Fourteen towns were played in Colorado—the tour of the state interrupted by two days in Wyoming.

The weather in these states continued to be good, although occasionally rather warm. The tour of the Canadian provinces had provided a good deal of inclement weather but the show

Studio portrait of the Klinkhardt's Troupe of Midgets which appeared in the Al G. Barnes Circus, season of 1927. Harold Davidson Collection.







**Al G. Barnes men's dressing room, performers in costume, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.**

always appeared on schedule at each town. All three Canadian provinces reported much rain. Heavy showers with hail delayed the crops and in many places roads were washed out which prevented the rural folks from getting to town on circus day.

In late August the California State Corporation Commission issued a permit authorizing the change of ownership of the Al G. Barnes' Circus from its present ownership by the Alliance Investment Corporation to a new corporation, The United Investment Amusement Corporation. The new outfit was organized in Nevada with 5000 shares of preferred stock at a par of \$100 per share; and \$100,000 of common stock with no par value.

The new concern took over the property on Washington Blvd. in Palms, now used as a circus winter quarters. This property with the 100 acres of land between El Monte and Baldwin Park was then transferred to the Barnes' Realty Company. The land at Palms was subdivided and sold as was 60 acres of the 100 acres near El Monte. The remaining 40 acres became the new Barnes' winter quarters.

After the stand at Lamar, Colorado, on 16 August the Barnes' show entered Kansas and then Oklahoma for twenty-one dates. Business was very good in Kansas and promised to continue in the Sooner state. About the first of September Al G. left for California to

**Al G. Barnes horses tied to baggage wagon on the lot, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.**



**Al G. Barnes open air menagerie, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.**

inspect the progress made by the work force at the new Baldwin Park quarters. Austin C. King had added a 12-piece band to the side-show.

The circus left Oklahoma and played Dallas, Texas, on 12 September (a Saturday) and then went to Fort Worth for the Monday stand. After playing Dennison on Tuesday it returned to Oklahoma for one day and then moved to Arkansas for three days. At the shows stand in Little Rock, Arkansas, on Friday, 16 September, the circus played in the hottest weather of the year. There was only fair business at the matinee but the night house was better attended.

On 14 September in Denver, Colorado, Charles C. Cook paid \$1001.00 following a trial in the Federal District Court. At the trial Cook had pleaded guilty to two charges of violating the immigration laws. Indictments had been returned against Cook and Al G. Barnes, but when the trial opened it was learned that the latter had not been with the show when the alleged violations occurred.

The charges grew out of the cases of Bertie Grenville Marcross, who was the present auditor of the show. The man was placed under bond of \$1500 while immigration authorities decided if he should be returned to Canada, from where he entered the United States without proper credentials.

Cook pleaded guilty to having brought an alien into the States. For this infraction he paid the \$1,000 fine. The one dollar fine was for his plea of guilt to the charge of assisting in the importation and immigration of alien contract labor. Cook paid both fines immediately, and it was expected that the charges against Barnes would be dropped after a review of the case in Washington.

Vivian, Louisiana, was the next Sunday date after the stands in Arkansas. Due to a law protecting the Sabbath from entertainment the show was forced to cancel the town. However, a petition was circulated and signed by 2500 residents asking for the circus to present a performance to which the show was happy to comply and a large crowd resulted.

Shreveport followed and then the show entered Mississippi for two dates at Vicksburg and Natchez. It then went to Louisiana where it made one stand at Baton Rouge and three days in New Orleans. Business was good during the New Orleans engagement but a late arrival two days later forced the cancellation of the matinee at Opelousas. The night house was capacity. On this tour of Louisiana Mrs. Maude Matlock became seriously ill and returned to her home in Los Angeles. The Sells Floto Circus offered some opposition at some towns in the state but reports indicated that both shows continued to entertain good houses.

In response to public demands and requests, Manager Cook brought Tusko from Palms, California, back to the menagerie. Despite the reasons given for this return to the show of the big elephant, it may have resulted from the need to get the animal out of Circus City because of the remodeling into a housing development and, with Baldwin Park not ready for occupancy, the circus was the only place for him. Bullhook Jackson was in charge of the elephant herd at this time and

**Al G. Barnes lot during morning set-up, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.**







Poster used to advertise the 1927 Al G. Barnes spectacle, *Aladdin and the Parade of Gold*. Pfening Archives.

*The Billboard* reported that there were fourteen elephants with the show.

Ruth, Babe, Jewel, Pearl, Vance (male), Jennie, Palm, Lois, Countess, and Tusko (male) were on the show—a total of ten elephants. Lois probably was on the show at this time in the late 1920s, although no specific date for her arrival has been discovered. Probably one or two punks received in the mid-1920s were still present, names not known to this writer. The total of fourteen reported by *The Billboard* seems a bit high. In any event, Tusko was back on the show after four years' banishment to the zoo at Barnes' Circus City.

The circus, after completing the 12-day tour

Al G. Barnes performer in spec costume, season of 1927. Note the baggage wagon is painted white with title probably in red. In the late 20's Barnes baggage wagons appeared to have been painted in a variety of colors, some of them white. Pfening Archives.

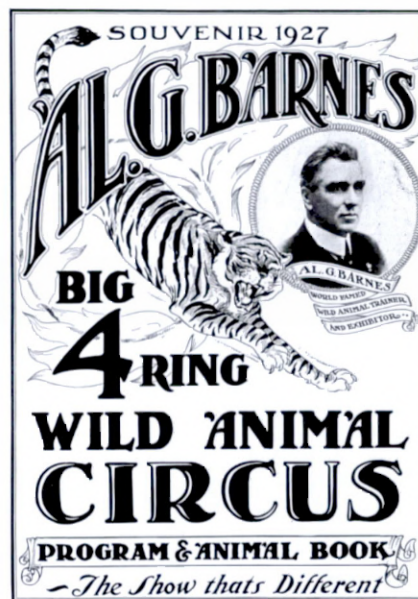


of Louisiana on 3 October, moved into Texas. In the Lone Star State it played a route which included thirty-eight cities and towns—from Marshall to El Paso. Business was good at most of the stands and improved as the show reached the western part of the state. However, Al G. had another financial impediment in early October when he had to pay another \$145,000 to the U.S. Attorney for the Internal Revenue Service. On Monday night, 17 October, as the show left Lampasas for Brownwood, the engine derailed. Manager Cook quickly sent the flats and baggage sections ahead for an early arrival in Brownwood. The sleepers did not arrive in the city until noon. The afternoon show was late and played to a very scant crowd, but the night performance was capacity.

The new tents, horse and padroom were received in mid-October. Laura Evans, one of the leads in the spectacle, left the show due to illness and returned to her home. Arthur Burson, wire walker, was out of the performance due to a bout with the "flu" and Prescott and Czerny, mental telepathists, had returned to the side-show. Visits were exchanged with members of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show which was at Corsicana.

After departing El Paso, the Barnes' Circus jumped immediately to Douglas, Arizona. Bisbee, Nogales, Tucson and Phoenix followed with the stand at Yuma, on 20 November, the final day of the tour. From this town on the Colorado River, the circus made the run directly to the new winter quarters at Baldwin Park. The total mileage for the 1927 tour was 20,370 with only two performances missed. Shows were given on sixteen Sundays and a free performance was presented at Baldwin Park to celebrate the home-coming at the new quarters.

Two major activities were immediately assumed after the show settled in. The first was a week's engagement with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for use of the circus equipment and personnel. The film company was making a circus spectacular at this time. The second big task involved preparing the show for a trip to Honolulu in January 1928, to return to the States on 2 March. The Tom Atkinson Circus was the first U.S. circus to play the Hawaiian Islands in this century.



Front cover of the 1927 Al G. Barnes program and animal book featured art work of a tiger and portrait of Al G. himself. Pfening Archives.

E.K. Fernandez had taken the Atkinson show across the Pacific in February, 1924. This show, after playing many stands in the Islands, returned to the States in July. The Fernandez Circus, with American acts, opened in Honolulu on 24 December, 1927, under auspices of the Phoenix Lodge, and closed on 2 January 1928. This show then commenced a tour of the Islands. It will be seen that the Al G. Barnes' Circus advent in Honolulu was a much larger and better equipped outfit than either the Atkinson or Fernandez shows.

Samuel M. Allen, who represented the Elks' Lodge of Honolulu, arrived in Los Angeles in late November to make the final arrangements with Harley S. Tyler to bring the Al G.

Al G. Barnes spec coming around the hippodrome track, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.



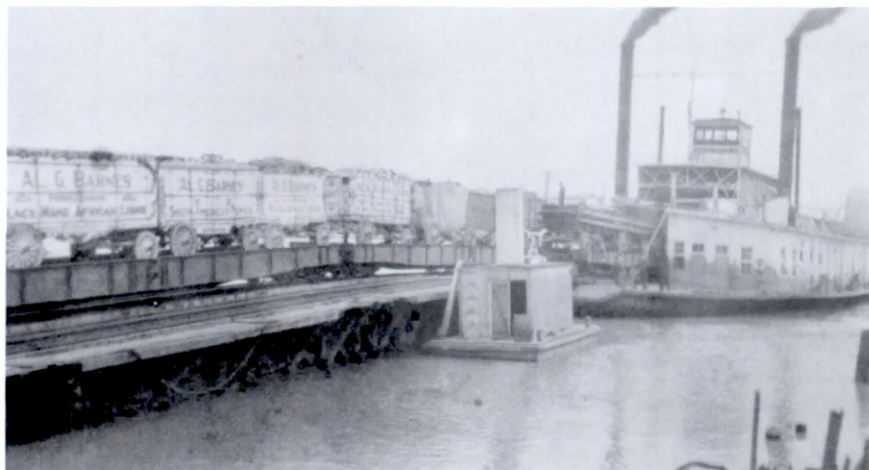


Barnes' Circus to the Islands in January. Tyler had already made plans with Barnes to take practically the entire circus to the Islands, and arrangements were made to leave the port of Los Angeles (San Pedro) on 15 January and to return to California on 2 March. More than 200 performers and workmen were scheduled to leave at that time. Harley Tyler was the director of the show. It was reported that the Elks' Lodge had gone to great expense, including marine insurance and transportation costs, to bring the show to Honolulu.

Part of the program as arranged by Tyler and Allen included an eight-male lion act; two elephant acts (six and three elephants in each); six bareback riding acts; one riding lion act; one riding tiger act; two 12-horse Liberty acts; "Jerry" the singing mule; a six-zebra act; posing-horse acts; high-school horse act (14 horses); tandem-horse act of eight horses (four in each ring); three-camel act; trapeze, swinging ladder acts; and about twenty clowns. The circus was to appear in two rings and an arena under a 125-foot round top with three fifty-foot middles.

Ed Ratach, a Los Angeles promoter, had already left for Honolulu in mid-November where he would handle the advance ticket sale. Andy Yamashiro and William Lederer of the Island Elks would work with Ratach. Harry G. Seber was in charge of the side-show which, with all its people, would leave Los Angeles in January.

Midst all the work on the new quarters still



Al G. Barnes loaded flat cars going on ferry boat to cross the Mississippi River at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, season of 1927. Pfening Archives.

being continued at full speed and the preparation for the trip to the Islands, it was announced that Lou Backenstoe and his chimpanzee, "Joe Mendi," which had been a feature for several years on the Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit, would be an important display with the Al G. Barnes' Circus in 1928. Backenstoe was scheduled to have two pit shows with the next edition of the Barnes' Circus.

In conclusion, it could be said that the tour

of 1927 was profitable for the Al G. Barnes' Circus even though it was a rather shortened season. Al G. Barnes was probably more involved with the business affairs regarding the conversion of Barnes' City to a real estate venture, the problem of purchasing and preparing Baldwin Park for a winter quarters and housing development, and the various demands from the Internal Revenue Service than he was with a circus operation. Also his attention was distracted by any number of film contracts and the shipping of the circus to the Hawaiian Islands. The new year, 1928, promised to bring an equally profitable tour with some financial questions yet to be answered.



*Season's Greetings*

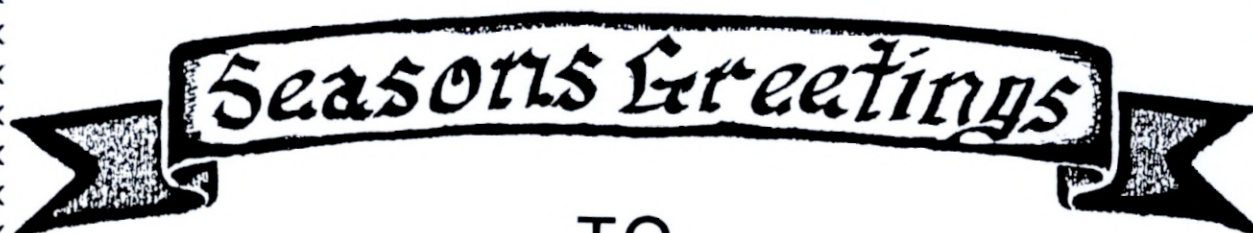




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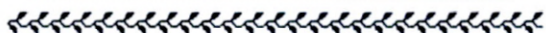
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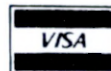
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# BARNUM & BAILEY TRIVIA

Compiled by John Lentz

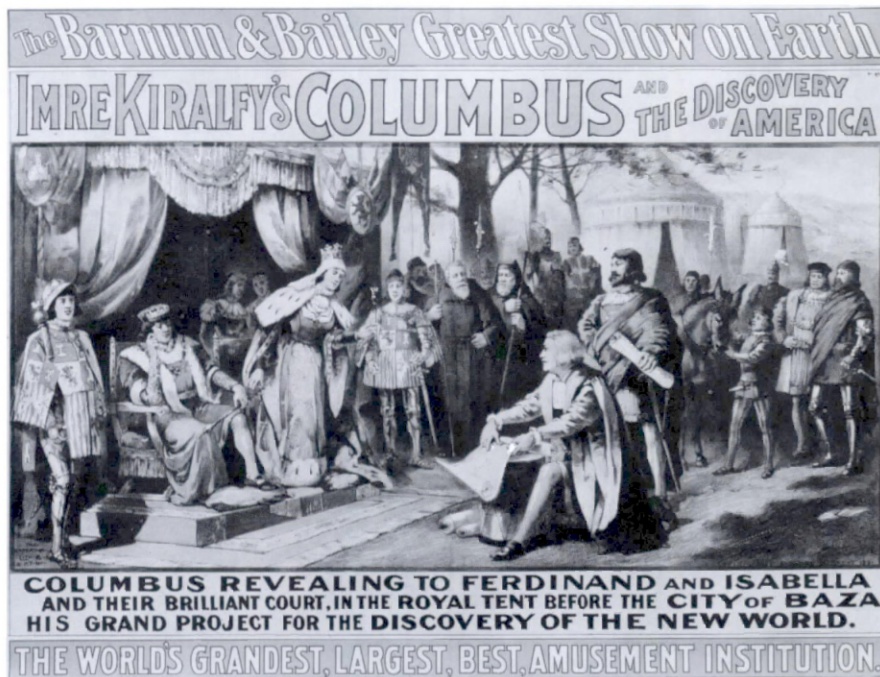
This article is a departure from the scholarly works that regularly appear in this journal. In contrast, it is simply a collection of items culled at random from some 40 volumes of the show's press books dating from 1890 to 1907. So, with apologies to the likes of Thayer, Dahlinger, the two Pfenings, the three Parkinsons and the lone Fox, here are bits and pieces of incidental information—unusual, amusing, trivial and otherwise—from the early times of Barnum & Bailey.

*Back to Baraboo.* "One of the interested visitors to the Barnum & Bailey Circus was John Ringling. Asked as to whether or not the headquarters of the Ringling Circus was to be removed from Baraboo, Mr. Ringling simply smiled and said: 'You ought to know better. Our quarters at Baraboo have been expanded and now stand as the best circus winter quarters in the world. Aside from that, the members of our company have invested a quarter of a million dollars in homes that cannot be duplicated in the state of Wisconsin.'" (1907)

*Animals Attached.* "Barnum & Bailey's Circus is minus its largest elephant, a hyena, four monkeys and an African gnu, all of which are now in the hands of court officials, having been levied upon by Dr. T.M. McIntosh until he gets settlement from the circus for its failure to provide him with two promised complimentary tickets." (1906)

*Truck Show.* "Barnum & Bailey has announced that it plans to tour the country in mammoth gasoline and electric vans. This radical departure from all custom and tradition took the circus world by surprise although the late James A. Bailey had seriously thought of transporting the circus by automobiles in order to avoid the high rates charged by railroads. The show estimates that its daily moves average one thousand dollars. Orders have been placed for 125 auto trucks of different sizes, each to be built and equipped for carrying special parts of the circus equipment. Sleeping and eating vans for the performers are also under consideration." (1906)

*Letters to Mr. Bailey.* "I desire to make a suggestion and a proposition to you. Let me travel with your circus as chaplain. You furnish me with board and lodging, the same as the actors. Let me minister to the sick and injured. Let me on every Sunday afternoon hold a public meeting in your tent. At this meeting we would have familiar hymns, prayers, a short sermon and, of course, a collection. The fact that you employed a chaplain and gave your tent for Sunday services would be a big advertisement for your circus. It would raise its moral tone and in-



Doubtless inspired by the popular Columbus spec of 1892-1893, a gentleman wrote the show in 1894 that his wife, a descendent of Columbus, would make a great attraction.

crease your receipts. I hope my proposition meets with your favor." (1894)

"I beg to inform you that my wife, Maria Antonia Columbo is, according to the latest historical discoveries, a lineal descendent of Christopher Columbus. I suggest that if you can use her, it would, without doubt, turn out to be a great success. I will say that we are ready to accept engagements for the coming season. Let us know as soon as possible so that I can get things from Italy that will be useful." (1894)

*Why Parade?* "The remark is frequently made that the Barnum & Bailey Circus is the only show in the world that would dare to eliminate the parade. The reason for this is obvious. The Barnum & Bailey name, its great reputation and the fact that the public is absolutely assured of a superb performance, are sufficient to crowd its tent without the questionable aid of a street display. A parade is undoubtedly a good advertisement for a show that needs it. A show that cannot fill its tents without a parade has something wrong with its performance and reputation." (1907)

*No Boozers.* "It should be reassuring to the public to know that all executives, performers and working men of the Barnum &

Bailey Circus, now touring Europe, are total abstainers, to which fact is attributed the military-like precision with which the great organization is handled and the small percentage of accidents." (1902)

*Midget Mixup.* "George Cadwallar, a man of patrician appearance, had a novel experience at the Barnum & Bailey Circus which he will not soon forget. He was arrested for kissing Miss Anna Horvath, the smallest woman in the world. As she was leaving the hippodrome pavilion, Cadwallar sauntered up to her, picked her up and deliberately kissed her. Her indignant cries brought forth a crowd of freaks and circus attaches. Cadwallar was arrested for disorderly conduct. After apologizing to Miss Horvath, he was released. He explained that her infantile figure had deceived him into thinking that she was merely a young child." (1903)

*Freaks and Fortunes.* "According to Toby [sic] Hamilton, the circus press agent, some freaks became immensely wealthy. Chang, the Chinese giant, left a fortune estimated at \$250,000. Millie Christine, the two-headed girl, was paid one thousand a week. The two Wild Men of Borneo, after some thirty years in the business, are worth about half a million dollars. Jo-Jo, the Dog Faced Russian Boy, made an immense fortune. You see, a freak, by reason of his physical deformities, has fewer opportunities than an ordinary person of spending his money. He can't mingle with society in a normal way and all his living and





James A. Bailey was said to keep at least 200 retired or disabled employees on the payroll.

traveling expenses are borne by the show." (1894)

*Tale of a Tail.* "One of the beautiful Arabian stallions in the Barnum & Bailey Circus met with a peculiar accident which robbed him of the greater part of his tail. Thereafter, the animal refused to work in the ring. After much consultation, it was decided that if a woman could have a switch made to take the place of natural hair, why not a horse's tail? A Parisian hair maker was found who was confident of his ability to make a tail that would in every way duplicate the natural adornment. Now the stallion proudly enters the ring again with a new tail attached in such a scientific manner that it will not come off during the performance." (1911)

*Prima Donnas.* "A Barnum & Bailey clown who works with a troupe of trained geese says that his quacking charges are a great study in vanity. Each goose is, in fact, so vain that it thinks the spotlights are glowing, the band is playing and the audience applauding for him alone. So, the trainer attaches a pair of blinders on each of them, so that there is no chance of their seeing other acts at work on the stage and in the rings. Their tiny brains harbor more professional jealousy than an entire company of human performers." (1906)

*Bad Press.* Newspapers almost always lavishly praised the Barnum & Bailey performance. Here is one of the rare sour notices: "The performance pleased children all right, but the grown people were very much disappointed. In no way was the show up to what they were led to expect from the advertisements. Some animal exhibits were fine, but as a whole it was a disappointment. There was too much bareback riding, and a whole

lot too much clowning of a fresh variety. The street parade had been cut out, and the indications were that a good deal of the show had been amputated along with it." (1906)

*Bailey's Largessee.* "Mr. & Mrs. Bailey, who have no children and no heirs, are especially charitable to circus personnel now retired from circus life. There are at least 200 former employees in no way connected with the show but remain on Mr. Bailey's payroll. He is a millionaire and uses vast amounts of his wealth for charitable purposes." (1904)

*Billing Bills.* "Barnum & Bailey spends more money for advertising than any other specialty business in America. In the New York newspapers during the stay of the circus in the Garden, the amount runs up to \$10,000 a week. Billboard advertising costs \$3,500 a week. Mr. Bailey is a great believer in advertising. He pays close to half a million a year to advertise the show." (1896)

*Rules and Regulations.* "There are 47 rules and regulations in the contracts which the men and women of the Barnum & Bailey Circus must sign. A violation of any one of them imposes a fine of one dollar to twenty dollars. Among the strange rules are that no chairs or stools can be carried. Performers must sit on their trunks. All workmen must wash and comb their hair before meals. No employee will go to bed in the cars with clothing or boots on. The loaning or borrowing of money is positively forbidden." (1896)

*Pay to the Garden.* "A lease has been executed between the Directors of Madison Square Garden and Barnum & Bailey for occupancy of that building next spring. The rent will be \$1,200 per day for each day the show exhibits, making it the largest rent ever paid by any show in the world." (1892)

*Poet of Publicity.* "The genius of circus literature, Mr. R.F. Hamilton, is as interesting as any single feature of the Greatest

The Barnum show spent a fortune on advertising each year. A large part of that expense was for billboards such as this one from 1917.



According to Barnum and Bailey publicity, Chang the Chinese giant left an estate worth \$250,000. Pfening Archives.

Show on Earth. Probably no man alive has so vast and strange a collection of adjectives and odd phrases. After a long and thorough study of circus literature, he knows just when and how to use his remarkable vocabulary to induce people to the circus. Mr. Hamilton maintains that circus writers like poets, are born, not made. His work is carefully read and edited by Mr. J.A. Bailey who makes such changes as he sees fit." (1895)

*Bridgeport Bargains.* "The first of a five-day auction sale was held at the Barnum & Bailey winter quarters in Bridgeport. Inventory of the surplus property filled a forty-eight page catalogue and it included three





elephants and thousands of costumes and props used in 'Columbus,' 'Nero' and 'Montezuma' spectacles. About 100 buyers were present. Costumes for ushers which cost \$60 were sold at 11 cents each. Mirrored Illusions which cost \$1,000 each went for \$250 each. Tights sold for less than the thread used in them. Mr. Bailey said that the surplus stuff cost \$240,000. He estimated that it would bring no more than \$20,000. For the coming season, he said that the show would be more expensively equipped with everything new and bright as the morning sun." (1894)

*Praise for the Parade.* "We read in the most disquieting way that Barnum & Bailey has become a paradeless circus. We can as well conceive of plum pudding minus the plums, baked turkey without the dressing or a Fourth of July bereft of brass bands and fireworks as a circus without a parade. To deprive us of a parade is to strip us of a prerequisite. Nay, nay, Mr. Circus Man. You may

### THE PRESIDENT COMMENTS

With the year winding down, this seems the appropriate time to review our society's progress during the past dozen months. On the positive side, the Milwaukee convention was quite successful. It offered a wide variety of activities which were clearly enjoyed by the members, and the circusiana auction raised more money than any of its predecessors. The membership drive, while falling somewhat short of expectations, did bring in the most new members since 1976. The *Bandwagon* maintained its high standard of past years, and in this issue breaks new ground in publishing a selection of rare posters in full color.

The major disappointment was the inability to publish larger issues of the *Bandwagon*. The editor has no shortage of material; it is a question of finances. Simply put, the more money available, the more pages we can publish. Toward that end my goal for 1987 is to redouble my efforts to increase revenues. I have a number of ideas which I will discuss in future issues. For the long term, however, the most viable way to increase revenues is to enlarge the membership, and most of my efforts will be in that direction. I would be very pleased to hear from any member who has ideas on this or any other subject.

Let me emphasize that the Circus Historical Society's finances are basically healthy, and we will end this fiscal year with a surplus. My concern is that we will have to increase the dues, or cut the number of pages in the magazine unless we continue to push to bring in more revenues.

My thanks to Greg Parkinson, Johann Dahlinger, and Fred Pfening Jr. for their help and support during the past year. Kudos are also due to all the historians who shared the fruits of their labors in libraries, archives, and show grounds with the membership through the pages of *Bandwagon*. They are the true heroes of the organization. Fred Pfening III



### Department of Publicity.

In the 1890s the Barnum and Bailey press department had its own letterpaper which differed in design from the stationery the show used for general correspondence. All illustrations from Pfening Archives.

take from us the concert, the clown's songbook, the fresh roasted peanuts and the pink lemonade. You may reduce us to one ring, if you will, but the parade is an ancient privilege. We refuse to part with it without raising our voice in strenuous protest." (Newspaper Editorial, 1905)

*Adieu, America.* "Here is great news for us

and bad news for the United States of America. Mr. James A. Bailey, owner of 'The Greatest Show on Earth,' has decided to make the circus a permanent British institution. It is plainly apparent it is never to return to the United States. He is interested in several other amusement enterprises in his country and will occasionally re-visit it. Otherwise, Mr. Bailey said that he would reside in Great Britain. He also stated that his decision to remain here did not mean that he was abandoning his country and that his patriotism and loyalty to it remain unquestioned." (1899)

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## SEASON'S GREETINGS

Fred. D. Pfening, Jr. Editor



## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



This circusy letterhead was used by the 1919 edition of the Barney title. The title is red outlined in black. The horse and tiger are brown. Very little is known about this circus. The show was not connected with the Barney Bros. Circus operated by Tom Atkins and John Foss in 1936 and 1937.



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